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**Redeeming 'slippery' meaning from the gap between the present
and past: Exploring visual art processes and visual representation**

By

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Candidate Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it incorporates no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

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Abstract

This study identifies and then investigates processes intrinsic to artworks that interrogate similarity and difference as situated within different assemblages of materials in artistic space. The impetus for this investigation emerged from an opportunity identified within the existing field of knowledge to redeem slippery meaning from the transitory space between two and three-dimensional forms. In doing so, the investigation demonstrates and makes explicit the significance of process and how it is integral to assembling meaning.

This research explicates my current practices in relational concept and form with previous approaches to art-making, exploring art practices of other artists and published writings by Walter Benjamin, Georges Bataille and Gilles Deleuze. The research considers an artistic position that does not differentiate between sketches, painting, montage and assemblage. In doing so, the investigation explores issues such as 'formlessness' in the context of transposition, and slippage in relation to porosity within the procedural application of transparent polymer for three-dimensional painting.

The main outcome of this research is the formation of a physically distinctive artistic perception and art practice, emerging in process through layers of transparency to blur the distinction between two- and three-dimensional forms. The research explores by critical examination creative practice as a layered differentiation, adopting an entanglement of creative approaches that challenges the threshold between two- and three-dimensional materials and approaches. In my practice-led research the

redemption of slippage and the investigation of the layered space between various materials, positions us to make complex visual renderings of the value between two and three-dimensional data. The research outcome produced reflects the diversity and connectivity that is created when layers impact, entangle and dissect.

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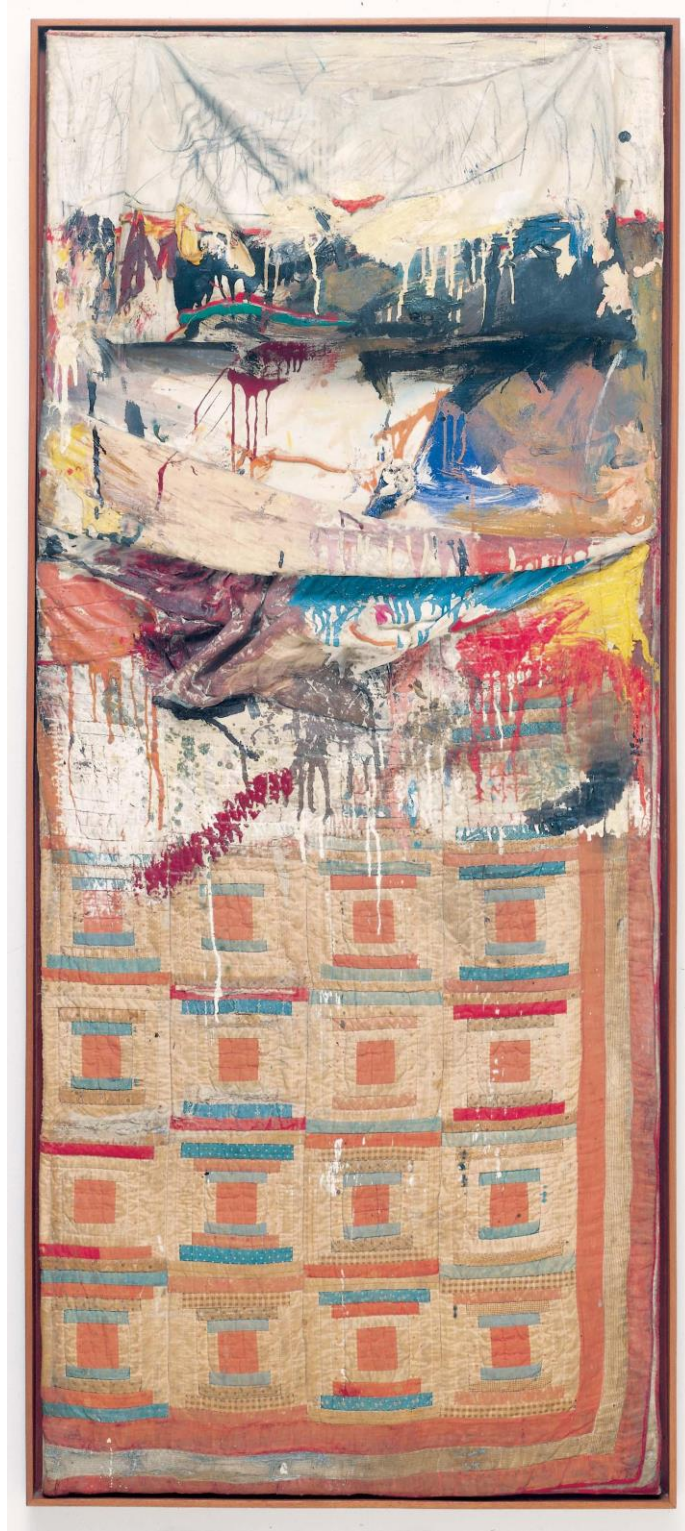


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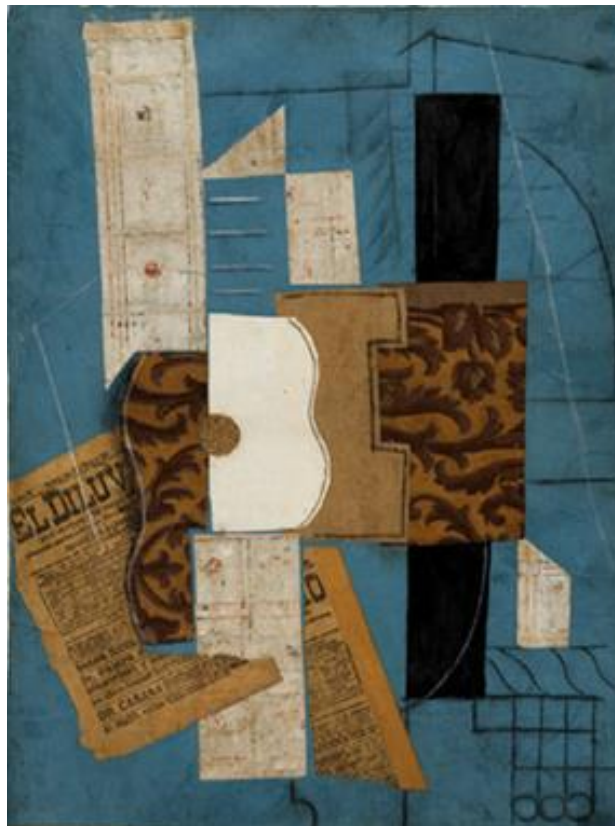


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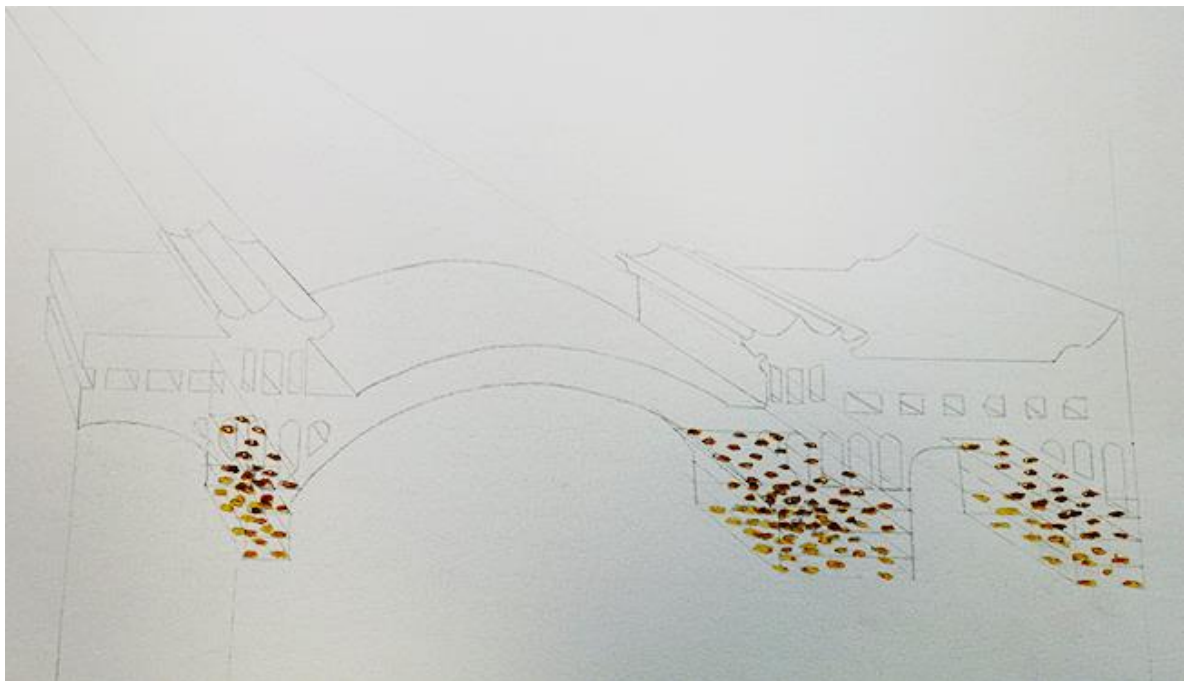


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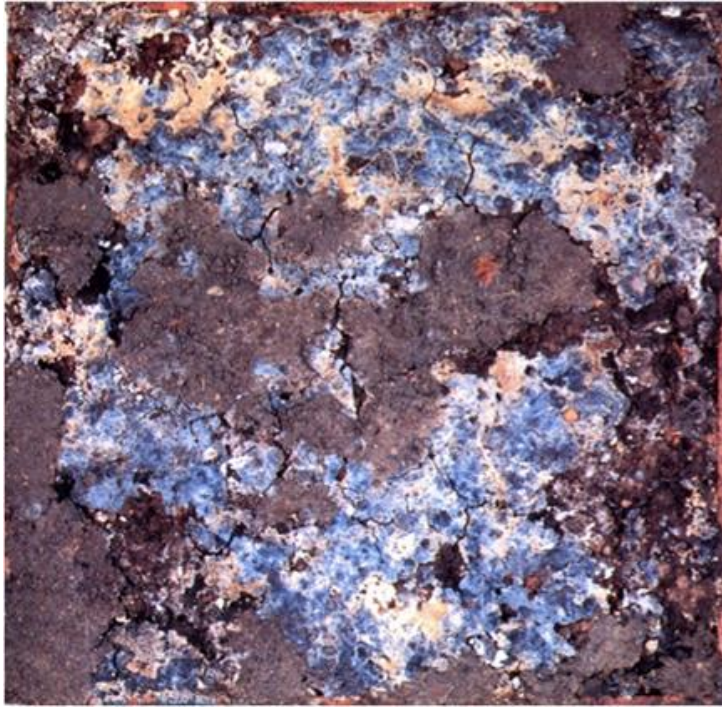


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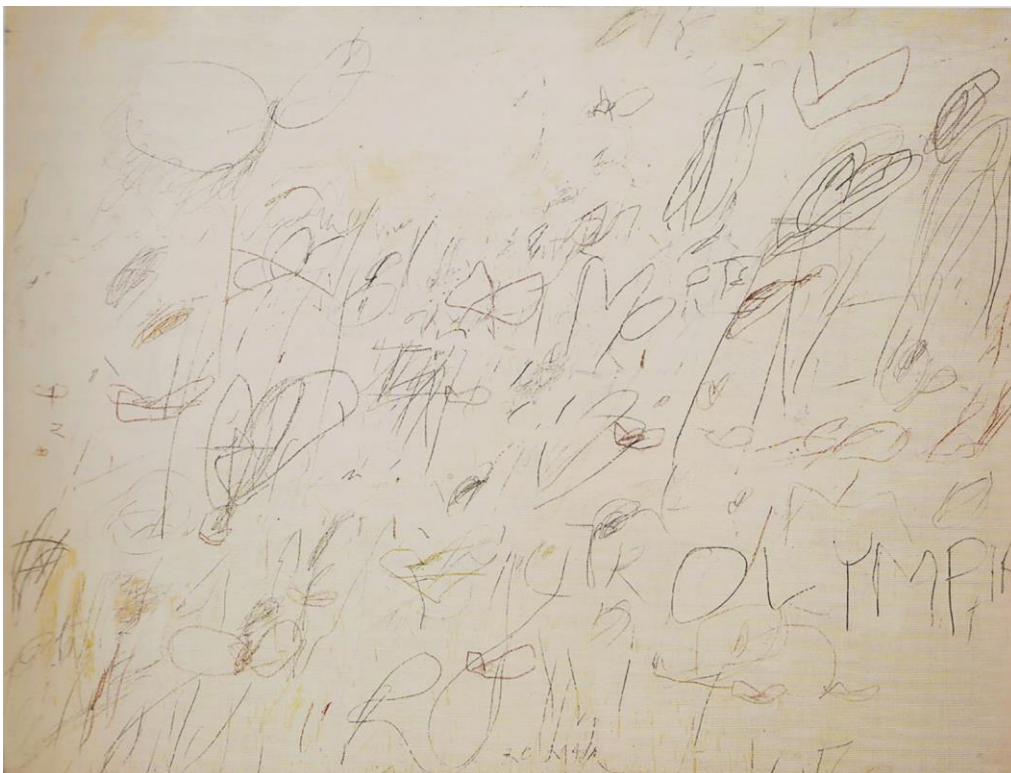


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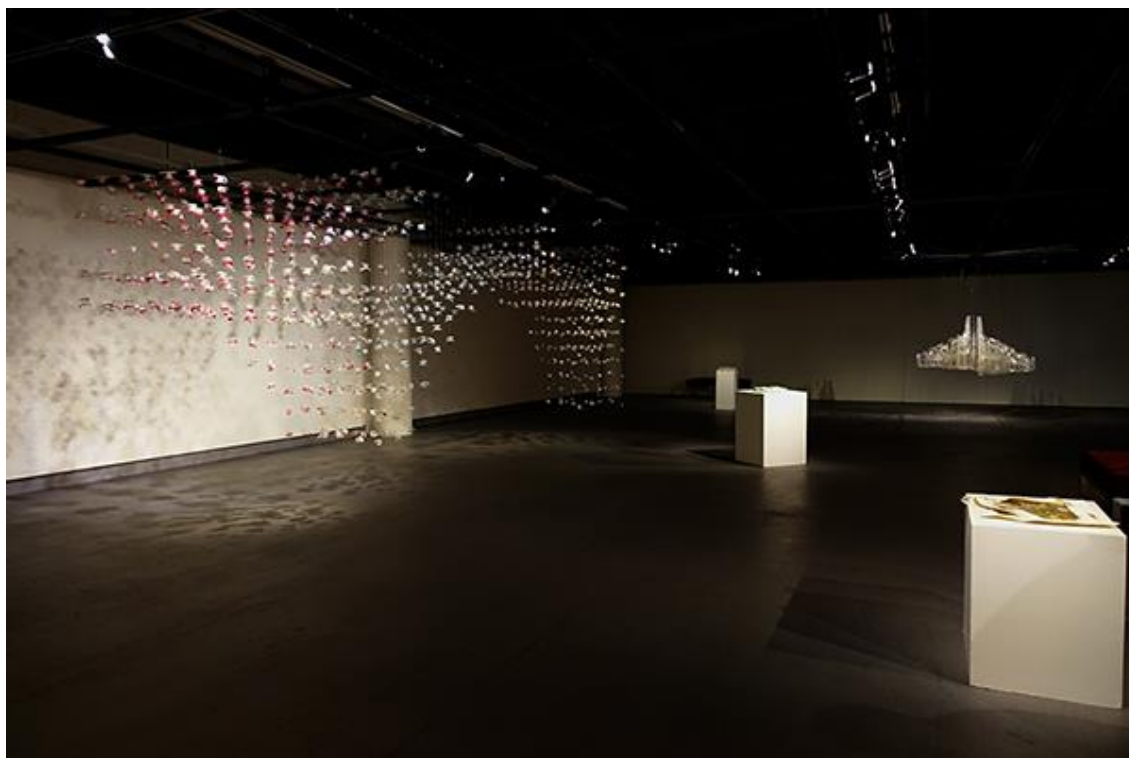


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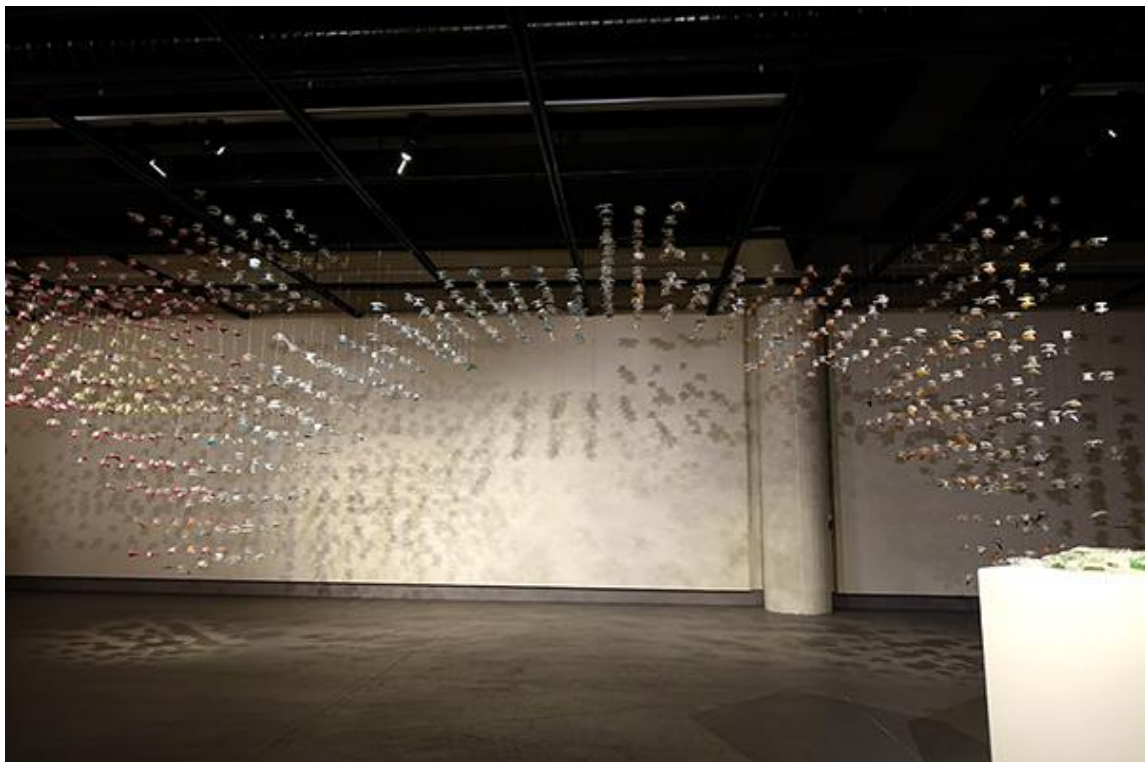


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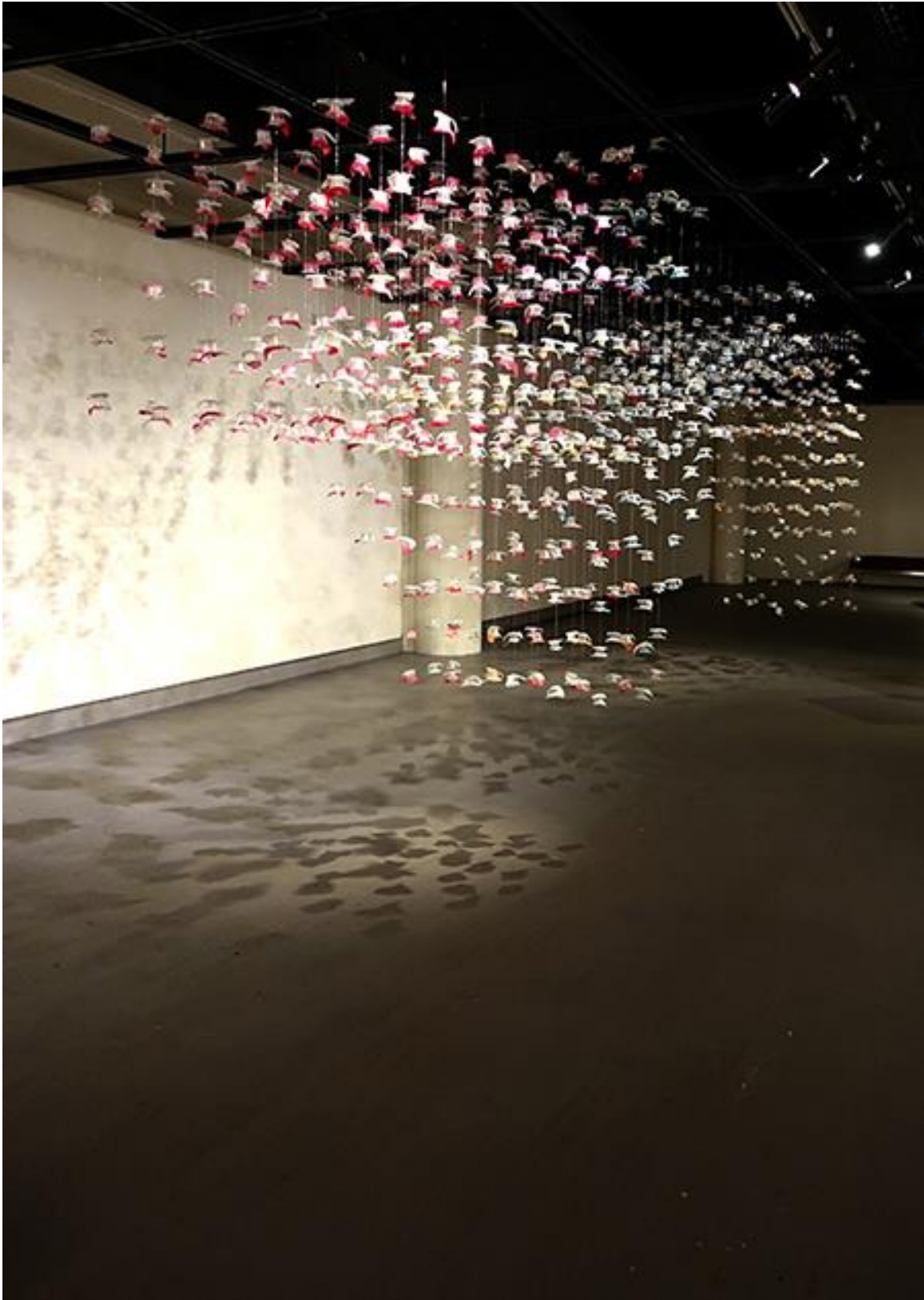


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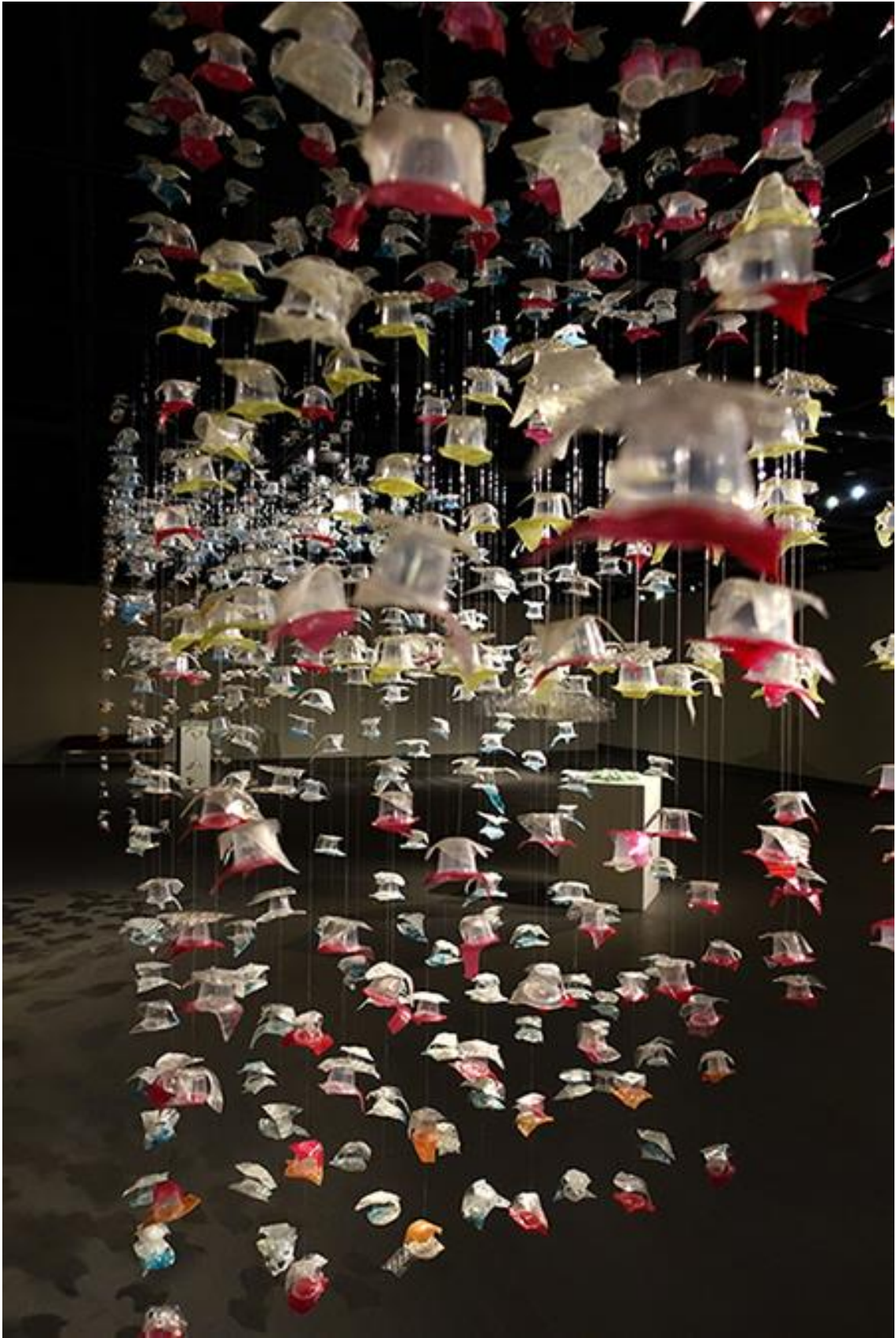


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1 The investigation

This PhD research is founded upon my interest in the material exploration of acrylic polymer as an alternative to using linseed oil, as was my practice from 1994. The development of water-based polymer ('transparentiser') from the 1950s to the present has meant that it now closely mimics the transparency of linseed oil. I found myself drawn to polymer's capacity to dry much faster than the oil-based mediums I was accustomed to working with, whilst keeping with the quality of oils' fluidity and transparency. The pliability of polymer also presents the creative opportunity that allows me to construct and experiment with multi-layering pieces of two-millimetre sheet. For my PhD artistic practice, this material development provides opportunity to extend my practice as a painter by satisfying my desire to work as a painter in process, but in the three-dimensional domain. Hence, this study is premised upon the fluidity of the polymer within the becoming of my art practices. In a broad stroke, this research examines the artistic shift and slipperiness of a creative practice that situates itself in a space between two-dimensional painting and drawing, and three-dimensional sculpture and assemblage, using acrylic as a threshold medium.

2 Research question

This investigation redeems and articulates slippery meaning from the space between present and past interactions with process and representation in two and three dimensional art forms. This practice-led research began with vague curiosities around

the role of slippages in relation to my PhD art-making. To direct this investigation, the following research question was devised:

- How does the interconnectedness of my art practice enable me to identify or locate slippages through relational study?

The nature of inquiry unfolding from this question pointed me to identify and explore similar and antecedent creative practice as a means for comparison. In establishing the interconnections within my varied modes of art-making, I sought answers on how the transition from sketching to painting highlighted a shift in both the expressive and conceptual within visual problem-solving.

The relevance of Deleuze's rhizomatic interconnectedness (Deleuze & Guattari 2003) to my PhD creative inquiry established the need to clarify its relationship to my multi-layered interlocking visual representation. This inquiry extended to how an excess of visual meaning is created through cross-disciplinary art practice. The concern with the arbitrary relationship between expressiveness and concept in my art-making requires examination with regard to Deleuze's rhizomatic multi-interconnection. The primary material that I use in my PhD artwork is transparent polymer and its relational or interlocking potential to the surrounding (negative) space has to be substantiated. Put simply, this is an inquiry into slippage within fluidity, interconnectedness within change and within the positive and negative spaces of my artwork: how the interlocking of polymer provides a see-through vision of becoming in my art-making.

From the research question, the discussion offered in this PhD exegesis brings to the surface a series of implications for creative practice that emerged from an exploratory disruption and lingering in the space between past and present approaches to practice. The ensuing discussion chapters draw together an entwined narrative to explicate how the notions of slipperiness, formlessness and porosity, as articulated in the writings of Benjamin (Benjamin 1999e), Bataille (Bataille 1985b) and Deleuze (Deleuze & Guattari 2003), shaped my creative practice in-process to render a threshold space between two- and three-dimensional art-marking, past and present, possibility and limitation.

3 Key terms and applications

In this PhD investigation, the term slippage is used as a means to effect change and shifts in the development of my art-making. It signifies a fluid movement that finds itself in and between different moments of creative production. Slippage, in the context of my research, is applied as a means to transcend time and broker relationality between different approaches to artwork; sometimes done at different times and periods of my creative life. Assuming I am drawing the same subject, for example an apple, over different periods of my life, slippages in style, meaning and representation inevitably ensue. The apple drawn in my art school days differs from the apple drawn in my high school days. This difference arises internally as a biological being developing, from acquiring new knowledge, intellectually and externally from the changing environment. Theoretically, this research examines the slippages of visual meaning made in relation to the writings of Walter Benjamin, Georges Bataille and Gilles Deleuze.

Benjamin's command of the term 'distraction' slips from a negative connotation in his earlier writing in 'Theatre and radio' (Benjamin 1999c) to a later incarnation in 'Theory of distraction' (Benjamin 1999d) where it has a positive connotation. These differing meanings make an engagement with distraction not only a reference point from which this inquiry unfolds, they provide insight into the performance of slippage within the operation of distraction.

Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (Benjamin 1999a) raises the idea of montages and fragments as points of engagement which resonate powerfully with the many challenges I have encountered in a disjointed art practice that includes working as a full-time lecturer. Montage, in Benjamin's sense, derives from and becomes distraction. In my own creation of montages, there are movements from distraction to distraction, from my teaching practices to art-making and vice versa in repetition towards infinity. The flowing drapes of the transparent polymer with its folding in and out nestles itself within a multiple interconnectivity with both Benjamin and Deleuze's thinking on allegory and the Baroque in art.

Deleuze's 'becoming' has impacted powerfully upon my thoughts about processes, particularly in relation to how I have engaged in a creative process of painting-becoming-sculpture-becoming-painting. In this sense painting and sculpture become a synchronous and inextricable rhizome, where my practice in the two and three-dimensional spaces interconnect on multiple trajectories.

Bataille's writing about *informe* (Bataille 1985b) provides the platform for the critical study of my process-based art in relation to slippages and porosity around three key throughlines of slippages, formlessness and porosity. These throughlines map the parameters for my theoretical and methodological investigation, through which I explicate the emergence of a new form of content or concept by way of interaction in my practice in a creative metamorphosis.

4 My context

Prior to undertaking this PhD study, my art-making was predominantly grounded in a two-dimensional praxis, namely painting and drawing. I started drawing without any instruction at the age of five, and have been drawing every day until my national service in 1988. I remember my Primary 1 and Primary 2 classmates used to pay me five cents to draw *Giant Robot* and *Ultraman* (both Japanese super heroes in the early 1970s) for them. The drawings of my early youth are predominantly recognisable objects ranging from human form to airplanes. My drawing evolved from figurative form to semi-abstract and subsequently abstract in my second and third years of diploma study. My painting is in many ways similar to my drawing because it does not favour completeness over incompleteness. My exposure to a wide range of two-dimensional visual representations in the development of my art practice provides an explanation. In the drawings of my early days, completeness corresponds to the figurative communication of the narrative. After I learned to value abstraction during my art school experience, I started to perceive beauty through a totally different lens, with incompleteness or rawness becoming a principle character in forming a more naturalistic vision in my artwork.

In this PhD investigation, slippage refers to the shift in conceptual thinking within changes in a different phase of creative practice. Established upon art-making and reading relevant published literature on the theoretical beliefs with regard to Walter Benjamin's use of 'distraction' slips in meaning and concept of the term emerges through the practice-led research approach. Therefore, its working definition, specific to the concept of art-making is developed across the duration of my research process. I focused on Benjamin's later writing that suggests dependency upon his earlier thinking. This is based on my belief that concepts and ideas perpetually slip from time to time in the mind of creative individuals.

To provide the context for this PhD direction, this introduction gives weight to artistic styles and thinkers that have been documented via published writing from early 20th century to present time that slips from one to another. My research challenges the idea that artists predominantly work in a single style, and in turn reveals the porosity of and erosion eating away at this idea. In Chapter 2, I elaborate on how some creative historians, and artists suggested that this is a representation of post-modernity in art-making.

5 My evolving practice

My non-preferential liking between completeness and incompleteness was formed subconsciously during the days of my untutored art practice. During this time, I embraced a normative logic approach to generating figurative form in art-making, which was underpinned by a feeling and expressiveness of my authentic self at the tertiary level. In my abstract art-making, opportunity is opened as spaces for experiment, play and risk-taking for the creation of distinct visual forms. This evolved

from recognisable visual representations that are marked by communication of meaning in the public sphere, to artistic creation that is characterised by my personal search for an individual artistic style in the private domain underpinned by a disregard for completeness. Hence, I see both painting and drawing as a continuum with incompleteness as one of its core features. This incompleteness, as shown in *Unconscious Dialogue 7* (Figure 1), uses visual cues to draw the viewer to form pattern or figurative form that they are familiar with, to create individual meaning in an existential way. It is a compelling means for me to invite the viewer to engage in visual thinking. Working in this manner also enables me to blur the line that demarcates art-making in a mathematical-logical mode and entangle it with a more personal meaning-making in the affective domain. Fundamentally, the meaning of my artworks is personal, however, exhibiting them crosses the line and brings them into the public realm. Therefore, subconsciously in my art-making processes, thinking processes move forward and backward between meaning in the private and the public spheres; creating another means to enact slipperiness in and of meaning. My art processes have become fluid within a continuum that extends between the irrational expressive self and the rational problem-solving mode that is required in three-dimensional construction. This belief in my art-making is formed via both knowledge and experience acquired over many years. In addition, I believe that linear continuum in my artwork should 'embrace all types of drawing from open-ended sketch to the finished work' (Petherbridge 2010, p. 3). As a visual artist, I naturally work in a non-linear continuum, and this is an approach that has endured, transcending time and phases within my creative practice. Both concepts and ideas operate in my art through pictorial juxtaposition and composition. In these approaches, boundaries between finite and non-finite are blurred.

6 Exegesis structure

To acquaint my reader with an overview of the key ideas and thinking that have guided and informed my PhD investigation, the sections of this exegesis have been arranged across a narrative thread as per the following:

Chapter 1 (this chapter) provides an overview of the motivations and intentions underpinning this PhD investigation, as well as flagging the key ideas, concepts, theorists and curiosities that have shaped its becoming. Insights are offered as to key terms and definitions with which I have engaged, and how they have been actioned within the context of my practice-based research. My own context as an artist is also shared in order to help those who encounter my work to acquire a sense of past and present approaches to practice, and my processes enacted to emphasise and render the space between.

Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the body of literature and examples of practice that have served as touchstones and reference points for my own inquiry of becoming, both in process and in practice. In particular, a comprehensive 'picture' of the key theorists' writings around slippages (Benjamin 1999d), formlessness (Bataille 1985b) and becoming porous (Deleuze & Guattari 2003). Chapter 2 expands the review of literature to intersect with further writers and artists who have encountered and actioned these theorists' ideas in ways that have furthered my own interpretations. In doing so, Chapter 2 sets the scene for more incisive discussion in ensuing chapters where I further explore the issues and implications of my transition from two- to three-dimensional art-making within the context of this PhD investigation.

Chapter 3 explores the continuum and relationship of slippage between sketches, painting, montage and assemblage within my artistic production. These variant modes of art-making create the developmental trajectory of my art practice and in turn becomes a basis for reflection, analysis and meaning-making. In this chapter, I establish the slippage narrative through which my artistic development moves towards a domain where boundaries between different stylistic forms become blurred. This artistic direction is characterised by the formation of my conceptual thinking that is specific to process-based art with creative processes and operating concepts crossing categorisation and definitions of traditional art forms. Discussions within Chapter 3 make explicit the relationship between artworks completed during my different periods of practice over time and enables me to identify and examine the gaps where slippages occur.

Chapter 4 delves into Bataille's *informe*, or formlessness, as a basis for transiting from two- to three-dimensional art-making. In this chapter, I explain my compulsion to undo and disrupt traditional values that are tied to painting, and do so through an examination of my non-linear crossing from two- to three-dimensional art-making. This 'discordant creativity' marks the critical operation within *informe*. My PhD investigation intersects with three distinct aspects of Bataille's *informe*, namely base materialism, impermanence and lowering to highlight the relevant issues relating to my encountering of materials and how I elect to situate these within process-based art. In doing so, this chapter examines the characteristics of porosity through the material and spatial exploration, the art processes in fluid dimension and the meaning that slips between different perspectives.

Chapter 5 unpacks my engagement with Deleuzean tools for unfolding new understanding in the blurring of boundaries between drawing and painting, and two- and three-dimensional work. The rhizomatic becoming of my art processes adopts an organic mode of production that embodies becoming-painting and drawing, heterogeneity, hybridity, repetition and multiplicity. These rhizomatic attributes expand my creative process and enable new ways of envisioning the junction between two- and three-dimensional art-making. It is here that I draw upon porosity to disrupt the threshold between two- to three-dimensional art-making. In becoming porous, I position my art-making in a porous trans-space, where perpetual slippages of conceptual formations brings about creative processes. Chapter 5 explains how completeness and incompleteness, between figuration and abstraction as underpinned by Deleuzean becoming makes way, through porosity, for slippages between two- and three-dimensional works to occur.

The Conclusion offers a conclusion of sorts which, rather than highlighting findings or resolutions, frames what might be traditionally seen as findings from a lens of disruption for openings acted upon, and possibilities yet to become. In putting these ideas and frames for encountering meaning into play, this chapter highlights how the intricacies of my art processes slip between theoretical understanding and experimentally reflective studio practices. These are the processes that rely on the transforming and intuitive creative insights drawn from the lived experiences of doing my art-making. In closing Conclusion, I articulate the significance of artworks that embrace fluidity in process and incompleteness in visual form given its rich potential to evoke new thinking around possible further growth, development and change.

7 Opening into the exegesis

In this PhD, I have investigated transposition or crossing from two- to three-dimensional art-making. The process-centric nature of this change, and my art-making, is non-linear. I have not consciously sought to build concepts upon earlier concepts. To use polymer to create assemblage was an ad hoc decision. The realisation that I am creating a third-dimensional artwork using painterly approaches emerged in process as I reflected upon pre- and post-production phases. This ongoing task of 'discordant creativity' remains a crucial operation in trespassing established boundaries of formalistic concern. Redeeming the slippery meaning from the gap in between artistic practices from the present and the past refers to the task of salvaging the meaning of art in a state of flux (becomings as opposed to being). The use of relational studies through which to focus on the various stages of my artistic practice becomes my logical approach to drawing understanding into this relationship between the present and the past, and how this impacts upon creative practice.

This literature review encompasses the research for the PhD topic ‘Redeeming “slippery” meaning from the gap between the present and past: Exploring visual art processes and visual representation’. My PhD literature review accompanies the artist-researcher through the journey of the investigation, and as thus should be viewed as a diary of information pertaining to the research project. In many ways, the literature review is reflective and specific to Benjamin’s metaphor of the *flâneur* (Benjamin 1979). Here I am referring to Benjamin’s work exploring the passage in the arcade, where significant moments of this practice-led visual art research are progressively registered by ongoing, in-depth creative investigation. My PhD research undertaken is a reflection-based investigation across a seven-year retrospective period. Reading about the art practices, philosophy and theory of inspiring artists and writers alike has generated moments of awakening in relation to and about my own artistic creation. In the process of my PhD investigation, the literature review operates as an opportunity for additional viewpoints in the relevant topics for the research to be unearthed.

1 On relevant artists

One significant challenge in writing this literature review emerged very early on in the investigation, when it became apparent that few artists or theorists have explicitly examined issues relating to slippages in art-making. However, there are artists working in a similar vein with a focus that does not directly associate with what I am investigating. For example, Adelaide (Australia) born painter Paul Hoban’s artwork is about movement and skin within the notion of layering. Being known for his paint –

skin method in painting, Hoban's artwork is popularly thought of as Conceptual Abstraction.

What Hoban is interested in is 'lines and blobs dancing in the lid (referring to paint); linking, merging, disappearing cool and bright' (Hammet 2010). From my observation, Hoban is poetic in his creation of the variety of movement. The movement within the skin of his artwork (for example, in the *Psyche* series, see Figure 2) is different to the movement of my three-dimensional paintings as produced during the PhD study.

While Hoban's visual movement is generated from the two-dimensional sphere, a variant visual movement from the third dimension operates in my artwork. As Hammet remarks in *After image*, the visual elements in Hoban's painting generate movement that 'promise directions, instructions and reference points but seem to lead nowhere, into a surface that is both overhead and underneath' (Hammet 2010). The visual movement in my *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3ii) vibrates and radiates outwards. Despite the fact that both Hoban and myself are using synthetic polymer, my artwork focuses more on its transparent quality rather than its quality of movement. It is our unique and distinctive use of these materials for different purposes that sets us apart.

Robert Rauschenberg's art practices provide another perspective for me to understand my creative development via artistic influences from European montage and collage to American abstract expressionism. In his 'combine paintings' (1955), Rauschenberg pushes the boundaries of two-dimensional flatness in his use of daily objects, such as a physical bed in *Bed* (Figure 4). His appropriation of every day

objects, I believe, can also be viewed as a reference to European artists working in the two-dimensional field, for example Pablo Picasso and Jean Arp. Marcel Duchamp is another European artist working in the three-dimensional domain, his potent symbol of industrial consumerism in *Fountain* (1917) being a relevant example specific to my PhD artwork. Both Duchamp and myself use materials that reflect the development of the industrial period in creating artwork. In art historical terms, scholarly discussion of Duchamp's *Fountain* is a premise for the slip between art and non-art form. These artistic practices of stretching beyond the two-dimensional is known to exist as early as 1917 in Jean Arp's *Trousse D'un Da* (Figure 5).

This confluence of antecedent Euro-American art practices in my PhD artworks allows me to critically examine 'slippages' within my creative development. The continuum of artistic influence in my art-making forms a non-linear interconnection that interlocks many different conceptual reasons and art approaches that generate space for slippages. This has resulted in my artwork and art-making processes spilling into other creative concepts, for example painting extending into the domain of three-dimensionality.

2 Exploring the term 'slip'/'slippage' from the different theorists'/artists' perspectives

Howard Eiland, in his analysis of Benjamin's writing of the early to the late period, pointed out that Benjamin's usage of the word 'distraction' (Eiland 2005) slips from a negative to a positive note. From the magazine article of 1932, 'Theatre and radio' (Benjamin 1999c, p. 583) to the well-known writing entitled 'The author as producer' (Benjamin 1999b, p. 768) from 1934, Benjamin articulated the negative view of

'distraction' in his discussion on Brecht's *Epic* theatre. Using these two texts, Benjamin differentiated the epic theatre from the 'theatre of convention' with words such as 'cultivation' to underscore the former, and the word 'distraction' to underpin the function of the latter. In his analysis of the 'theatre of convention', *Zerstreuung* (meaning distraction) also emerged to embody the sense of '*divertissement*' that refers to a form of complacent diversion.

This form of distraction is purportedly produced using 'witchcraft' (Benjamin 1999d) to distract the audience into a form of 'hypnosis' within the *Bannraum*, a magic space for the working of a spell. The state of 'trance' (Benjamin 1999d) that bears upon the audience of bourgeois theatres of convention is a state which Brecht compares to that of sleepers dreaming restlessly with their eyes open. This is also similar to the 'strange stare' and 'spell-stopped' stance of the characters in Shakespeare's *Tempest* who come under the influence of Prospero's art. Prospero added that:

'My high charms work... And these, mine enemies, are all knitted up/In their distractions' (Shakespeare 1991, p.38).

High charm operates to knit and spellbind the enemies into distraction. This is to disorientate the adversaries in the battlefield and thereby ensure victory in war. Drawing one's opponent into a state of distraction is similar to channelling them into negative territory. Therefore, distraction in this context is perceived negatively. From another perspective, distraction is understood as moving of one's attention from one place to another. In redirecting one's focus point, changes in viewpoint take place. Metaphorically, I associate this change as a slippage between deviations and

alteration in individual artistic creation. This is particular to our pluralistic art world where a number of emerging contemporary creative practices are known to be 'irregular' in their individual artistic output. In other words, there is a growing number of artists whose artworks are produced during different time and generational periods, which are perceived to be stylistically distinct.

Within contemporary art practices, an increasing number of artists, whose artworks are created during different periods, are perceived to be stylistically distinct and not conforming to the historical definition of continuation of artistic signature or style. In 1985, Meyer Schapiro writes that 'If the works of Pablo Picasso were not identified directly with his name, if they were shown together in a big exhibition, it would be rather difficult to say they were the work of one man' (Schapiro 2000, p. 28). This is one example that typified the pluralistic and divergent artistic practice in the contemporary art world. Art historian David Campbell observed that 'visiting a [Sigmar] Polke exhibition is often like wandering around a group show' (Campbell 1996, p. 19). Campbell noted that the experience of viewing a Polke solo exhibition is synonymous to seeing works of many different artists. And Arthur Danto observed that 'when I first saw a retrospective of [Gerhard] Richter's work ... it looked like I was seeing some kind of group show' (Danto 2005, p. 182). Three different authors used the same metaphor 'group show' to describe their bafflement at the stylistic changeability of three different painters. Significantly, the individual artistic style of the above-mentioned painters is characterised by the constant shift of their creative approaches in their art-making. Artist William Anastasi recalled that what had struck him when he first saw the Arensberg collection at the Philadelphia Museum was 'that every Duchamp was so completely different from every other Duchamp' (Galenson 2009, p.

145). In a tribute to his old friend Francis Picabia, Marcel Duchamp, as cited in *The writing of Marcel Duchamp*, described Picabia's career as 'a kaleidoscopic series of art experiences ... hardly related to one another in their external appearances' (Sanouillet & Peterson 1989, p. 38). The painter and photographer Man Ray explained that he made sudden changes in the style of his work because 'I enjoyed contradicting myself' (Gramont 1970, p.136).

Artists from the late 20th century such as Sigmar Polk, Marcel Duchamp, Bruce Nauman, Man Ray, Francis Picabia and Pablo Picasso are known to be versatile in their artistic practices. The stylistic qualities of their artwork change significantly from one to another. This self-pluralistic art-making puts into question the value of artistic signature that the art market prizes as important, for example in the paintings done by Rembrandt during the classical period. The practice of stylistic versatility is a pattern that has been followed by a series of important artists of the past century. It is a practice that has been consciously learned by these artists, from the examples of their predecessors. Bruce Nauman's art, for example, is so varied in form that Peter Schjeldahl acknowledged in 2002 that 'There is no Nauman style' (Schjeldahl 2002). Nauman has explained that early in his career he was influenced by a retrospective exhibition of the work of Man Ray, as he remarked: 'What I liked was that there appeared to be no consistency to his thinking, no one style' (Galenson 2009, p.10). In addition, Gerhard Richter observed in 1977 that 'changeable artists are a growing phenomenon. Picasso, for instance, or Duchamp and Picabia – and the number is certainly increasing all the time' (Galenson 2009, p.348). My PhD art practice is related to this perpetual shift of artistic style. Fundamentally, I am not locked in specific stylistic form and this gains me the freedom to explore different approaches and materials,

learning and expanding my repertoire in art-making. Theoretically, these slippages of artistic practice enable the Deleuzean rhizomatic interconnectedness within my creative development.

Avant-garde artists such as Picasso, Duchamp and Picabia perceived stylistic change as a significant aspect of their modernist art-making. One can label Dale Frank as a classical avant-gardist because he does not conform to any particular artistic form. A Dale Frank solo exhibition could consist of anything from paintings to a series of found-object sculptures, to a performance-installation where the audience is requested to dance in a gallery decorated as a disco. Once he collated 20 years of his art world correspondence and placed it in a large glass display case in the gallery, along with a \$20,000 price tag. His work echoes everything from Marcel Duchamp to the minimalist canvases of Marc Rothko or Yves Klein to the *décollage* practice of Mimmo Rotella. Dale Frank's response to the regular criticism of the perceived lack of formal consistency in his artwork is:

'This idea of "consistency" is a very Australian thing. If you're consistent you're known and you can develop a product over several years. People know what they're getting and think they're getting value for money. I think art is more than that. The thing that binds [all my art] together will be a lifetime's work' (Frost 1999).

Frank pointed out that after 20 years of art-making, the elements that tie it all together will start to form into something: 'The sculptures, the performances ... everything. When you reach a certain stage, the work can be seen in a broader context, a longer

timeframe' (Frost 1999). When Frank is asked to speculate on what those unifying elements might be, 'No', he says emphatically, 'An artist shouldn't say things like that anyway, they can be quite easily taken the wrong way' (Frost 1999). More recently Frank has painted on a fiberglass 'canvas', a material that he claims is as archivally sound as cotton duck. And besides, he just likes it. 'The paintings are on UV-protected woven Chinese (made) fiberglass. I just like the material. It's as safe as linen, conservation wise. It's a very technologically "now" material to use' (Frost 1999). These 'irregular' artistic outputs register apparent shift or slip in stylistic pattern and open up questions about the changes within my artistic practice in this PhD research.

The slippage in Benjamin's use of distraction coincided with his more complicated attitude towards distraction. The evidence of this shift in attitude toward the concept of intoxication indicated by the examples of 'intoxicated experience' found in the *Arcades Project*, for example, the emphasis placed on the anamnestic intoxication of the *flâneur* wandering the streets at all hours; on the gambler's presence of mind in the intoxication of play; or the enchantment of the collector who both loses himself and renews himself in gazing upon his object.

All these 'instances' steer the reader towards a more complex conceptual construct with regard to the problem of distraction than we get in the essays on Brecht (1964). In Benjamin's essay on 'technological reproducibility' (Benjamin 1968), it is apparent that distraction within the modern context must be understood dialectically – not in terms of the binary opposition between concentration and distraction – it is recognition and distraction in Brecht's theory (Benjamin 1968). In Benjamin's 'Theory of distraction' (Benjamin 1999d), the challenge is to appreciate 'the value of distraction' which he

associates with the merger of educational value (*Lehrwert*) and consumer value (*Konsumwert*) in a new form of learning. Therefore, within the development of Benjamin's writing, the term 'distraction' slips from a negative to a positive form. This slippage formed a reference point for further discussion on issues relating to the change of my artistic practices from one period to another. In Eiland's analysis (Eiland 2005) of Benjamin's slippery usage of 'distraction', the constant he established for the comparison is how distraction is perceived from Benjamin's earlier to later writing.

Within my art practice, it is fundamentally important to make a connection with these relevant theories of scholars and philosophers in the investigation of slippage because my art-making is a crossing of interconnection that is characterised by fluid movement of change in both conceptual and expressive undertakings. In my PhD study, the constant is the use of acrylic polymer. The acrylic polymer is the point for qualitative measurement across my PhD artwork. For example, to identify the different possible use of the polymer in different artworks done within the duration of study, whether it is for two-dimensional painting purpose or for something else. It is a material means in which slippages are investigated using relational study to how art thinking and processes shifted from my earlier to later creative output.

3 Collage, montage and assemblage: Fragments and ‘breaks’ in exploring non-linear artistic growth

My artistic development can arguably be read as a non-linear reaching-back to connect with my earlier art practices. Brecht’s idea of epic theatre provides the critical platform to substantiate the connection of montage and its non-linear proliferation to my art-making.

The fragments and the rupture within my artwork is conceptually woven into ‘breaks’ and interruptions underpinned by the multiple interconnectivity of Deleuze’s rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari 2003). Brecht sees epic theatre as characterised by ‘montage’ because unlike dramatic theatre that is distinguished by ‘growth’, ‘linear development’ (Benjamin 1999c) epic theatre is marked by ‘breaks’ (*Sprünge*), interruptions and by the fact that ‘each scene [is] for itself’ (Brecht 1964, Brecht 1957). This quote characterises two distinct forms of artistic development, namely those that are marked by growth and linear development and the montage model that is represented by ‘breaks’, interruption and the multiple connectivity of Deleuze’s rhizome. This thinking and conceptual process also relates to the outward movement of the rhizome. Given its non-linear quality, the argument for the sensibility of my PhD artworks’ reaching backward to connect to earlier artworks is pertinent. As a painter, my thinking process is not linear. There is no sense of beginning or ending in the manner I perceive my compositional processes. Similar to the montage model, my painting is about creating interruption or ‘visual breaks’. This break is synonymous to creating strange visual contrasts that physically impact within the finished artworks.

4 Epic theatre as montage in relation to experimental and process-based art

In this investigation, epic theatre as montage is used as a metaphor to mitigate the conceptual alignment of fragments and disruption within my artwork. The affinity between my art processes and Brecht's writing on the operations of epic theatre reinforces aspects of montage in creating emergence of new potentials for subsequent art-making. The interruption of action that Brecht described in his theatre as 'epic' constantly counteracts illusion on the part of the audience. Such illusion is a hindrance to a theatre that proposes to make use of elements of reality in experimental rearrangements. In the end with the experiment, 'situation' appears. This is not brought home to but is distanced from the spectator.

Brecht recognised it (natural development) as the real situation – not with satisfaction, as in the theatre of Naturalism, but with astonishment. Epic theatre, therefore, does not reproduce situations; rather, it discovers them. In my art processes, this experimental and process-based nature resulted in a visual form that is not 'polished'. This is a mark of continuum that does not differentiate between end product and processes. This end product in its raw state exemplifies how my artwork is a construct of situations and visual problem-solving. The availability of found material is restrictive, whilst at the same time creating a situation that allows for inquiry and resolution, the problem being the act of developing a three-dimensional painting. Like epic theatre as montage, my process-based art is underpinned by experiment not to form rigid composition but to discover new visual possibilities and concepts.

5 Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic interconnection alignment with Benjamin's *flâneur*

Conceptually, my PhD artworks allude to Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic interconnection because the symbiotic connection at one level in forming linkages with various philosophies and theories, writing and practice to another level that intertwine ideas to sketching, painting, montage and the three-dimensional assemblage are the fluid in creating infinite visual possibilities.

My investigation engages the crossing and connection in underscoring shift and slippages within change. Walking through Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (Benjamin 1999a), the concept of Deleuze's infinite rhizomatic, as a means for philosophical and physical connectivity, becomes clear. The arcade is a site that connects peoples, consumables and trades in physical terms. It is a space that enables connection between different classes of people. The material that constructs the arcade is a constellation of different modern buildings that is connected in ways that were not previously thought possible. My PhD assemblage artworks draw connection with the space surrounding them. I am interested in the physical transparent quality that connects with its background by interlocking with the visual quality of the environment. I view the space in-between the pieces of polymer as space in-between buildings in the arcade. They create a liminal passage for movement and connection. In the PhD outcome I use the metaphor of a bridge to draw these linkages and crossings into Benjamin's reading of Naples as porous. In Naples, Benjamin discovers that there is no distinction between 'private' and 'public' space. This space is similar to Brunei's water-village, where tourists are allowed to freely move from public space into the villagers' residences (private space). I argue that the slippages

occur in such a space that is defined as porous. A space such as the arcade where infinite multiple connections are made possible without demarcation marks a site where possibilities of the unknown occur. The way my pieces of transparent polymer interlock with each other characterises this interconnection that blurs the boundaries between them. Art processes and conceptual thinking interlock and the connection within this smooth space (Deleuze & Guattari 2003) generates slippage as a movement. Therefore, process-based and end product can be porous where artistic ideas take a variant route and slip into deviant form.

6 Georges Bataille's 'formlessness'

Going through Bataille's 'formlessness' highlights issues on transposition and my process-based art. For Bataille, *informe*'s objective is to redefine a dictionary where the meaning of words is not the focus, but where it is their task that is the emphasis (Bataille 1985). The task or challenge within my art-making during the PhD has been the search process of 'play' and the possibilities of certain emergent concepts or thinking. My plan for the final PhD assemblage is to present an 'incomplete' bridge that also 'looks' complete. The pieces of polymer are tasked, or challenged to create visual movement. This movement is commonly perceived in its ephemeral state as insignificant and also lowly. Its movement is fluid as slippage. Its transitory nature is attributed to how it is connected to anything.

7 Conclusion

This literature review discusses philosophical thinking and art-making relevant to the conceptual essence of slippage within this PhD research. I have, for example, specifically used Rauschenberg's art as a reference point for relational study in the examination of my art practice. Both Rauschenberg's and my art practice are a critical reaction to the abstract expressionist's view of two-dimensionality and artistic style. The development of Euro-American art practices make provision for relational studies in examining 'slippages' within my creative practice. It is these artistic influences in my art-making within a non-linear way that creates interconnection and gives rise to slippage of practices and concepts. Overlaps between painting, collage, montage and assemblage also create the conditions for slippage. These slippages within my artworks characterise the growing trend in contemporary art practices whereby artists are not bound by the notion of a 'consistent' style. It is this interconnection that seamlessly multiplies artistic forms, and concepts are seen through confluences and influences that form the basis for my PhD research, writing and artistic outputs.

Shifts/slippage from drawing to painting, collage, montage and assemblage

1.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between sketching, painting, collage, montage and assemblage in my PhD art research. These physical art practices form the development of the creative outputs of this research not only in a physical sense but also, when looking more deeply and conceptually, these activities expose the gaps where slippages occur. In my sketches, I perceive my lines as fragments that combine and create meaning whether in figurative or non-figurative form. Within my artwork, the flow of the linear is formed by the fluidity of acrylic paint. It is synonymous with my painting because the processes in crafting representation either in oil or acrylics is rendering layers or what I view as fragments of pigments on a surface. Significantly in my PhD art-making, lines and layers of paint are interchangeable and adopted to produce visual representation. Underpinning this thinking is the conceptual and physical continuum that flows between the operations of sketching and painting. The common element shared by the process of raw visualisation in drawing and the building of pigments in my painting is that of fluidity. The accumulation of lines corresponds to the creation of form and space in the formation of sediments of colour stains. Beyond working with lines and pigment, my artwork also employs leftover fabrics. Including fragments of fabric in my recent artwork characterises the remnants of my past creative practices in the *Mickey Mouse Brush Painting* series 1 (Figure 6), completed between 2003–2009. In material terms, the fabric's softness, flow and transparency is specifically relevant for use with the polymer. Figure 8 provides a

visual reference to the type of cloth that I used in this series of work. The non-linear continuum that exists between sketches and paintings crosses into the domain of montage and collage, and then stretches into the third dimension as assemblage.

1.2 Relationship of my art to montage

Montage is known as the technique of combining pictorial elements from numerous visual sources to create the illusion that the elements belonged together originally. In this process, each element is allowed to maintain its separate identity as a way of adding interest or meaning to the composition. My PhD artwork is a form of montage created by using many different layers of polymer and other elements that are produced over a period of time. The seemingly unrelated fragments of these semi-transparent pieces are the results of exploration and experiments with the visual limits of the material. Each piece of polymer in itself forms a narrative of its own. Hugo Ball from Germany who created the Dada manifesto in 1916 pointed out that montage is ‘a contrapuntal recitative in which three or more voices speak, sing, whistle, etc., at the same time in such a way that the elegiac, humorous or bizarre content of the piece is brought out by these combinations’ (Ball 1974; 1996, p. 57). In the visual arts, montage is commonly understood as the formation of figurative or recognisable representation using fragments or cut-outs from other image sources, for example as seen in *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (see Figure 3i).

From Walter Benjamin’s point of view, the key feature of montage is disruption (Buck-Morss 1989). This visual disruption of montage breaks the viewer’s regular thinking, pushing vision towards a utopian world. An example of this is how the turquoise blue in *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3i) disrupts the regularity of perception.

The colour contrast evokes the question of why difference is utilised in order to disrupt the uniformity. In visual terms, this ushers in a sense of strangeness that simultaneously provokes thinking about homogeneity and one's uniqueness in the world of things. This strangeness is also premised upon my mind-set in mixing the act of painting with the practice of montage. In this context, my artworks echo the operation of montage and at the same time establish a connection to the painterly practices on canvas. Metaphorically, it is painting montage. It is in this meaning-making and perception that, for me, the common denominator between painting and montage is established.

1.3 My artwork's relationship to combination printing

My artwork also reflects earlier art practices in photography. For example, I have investigated combination printing, a process used during the 1840s in which two photographic images are combined to form a single visual image. The idea of combination printing developed from the desire to position photography as a fine art form by using more idealised images (Davenport 1991). Synonymous with dual-negative landscape photography, its process was technically much more complex. As a combination print, Hippolyte Bayard's (Lo Duca 1979) *Self Portrait as a Drowned Man* (Figure 9), completed in 1840, is known to be the earliest form of photomontage. Photomontage can be understood as a photographic collage because it uses a similar technique of cut and paste. In the past, when a picture was taken on transparent film, the photographer used the method of stacking the film together, or cutting and gluing the film together to make a collage. The thicker transparent polymer method I have developed during my PhD research is similar to the thin negative method used in film. It records different moments of my art-making, registering processes and material

thinking in the exploration and visualisation. The 1840s filmic method of working with transparent film within combination printing, using two or more negatives, relates directly to how I use self-created transparent polymer. Conceptually, the individual pieces of transparent polymer represent the moment of the artwork's production. The interlocking of these pieces of polymer is used to signify time, in terms of a continuum that seamlessly slips from one period to another.

1.4 Painting's relationship to collage

Miró's statement of 1928 '*Je veux assassiner la peinture*' (which in translation means 'I want to assassinate painting') saw collage as a means to murder or assassinate painting. Departing from art 'as an end in itself' (Candela 2011, p. 183), to 1928 Miró had started to explore other methods of artistic production, using the techniques of collage and assemblage as a way to overcome the limitations of easel painting. He saw the use of mass-produced images in art as a way of ending individual production of images by artists and the demise of the artistic signature in painting. Therefore, for Miró, collage signalled the death of painting as a tradition in Eurocentric art practices. However, in my PhD investigation, collage is taken and worked with as an extension to the painterly method in painting. For me, collage and the morphing of material allows me to re-contextualise painting as a practice in a new and different world, this being the 21st century. The individual artistic signature of the old masters is re-contextualised, within which the artist generally decides compositional elements in the two-dimensional art. I do not perceive my PhD adoption of collage/montage as assassination of personal stylistic form. The reason for this perception is that I do not use mass-produced images from magazines or newspapers in my artwork. The fragments in my collage/montage works are individually created by me, the artist as

maker. They are synonymous to each layer of paint that is applied to create a painting. It is creating 'painting' in a fragmented way. It is also to produce a blurring between disjointedness and harmony in my artwork. Each piece of polymer is created without a sense of how it will be connected to form a visual experience. However, similarly to Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (Benjamin 1999a), my individual polymer fragment interpretations correspond to each entry (text cited from commentators, critics and historians) of *Das Passagenwerk*. Each piece of the translucent polymer that I made during the PhD explorations is a registry of the moment of its creation. It does not directly communicate in the way Benjamin does, as with entry in the *Konvoluts* (Benjamin 1999a). Every layer of my artwork has implicitly sought to carry the unheard voice of the painter. With the pieces of polymer reorganised, they collectively express both its development in time and also my creative thinking over its materiality. The compositional nature of my artwork reflects my signature as a distinct being. Within my artwork, I strive for the individual, via a process of many layers and a sensibility that art-making is integral to humankind. The decision to make different choices based upon my development as a human in my specific spiritual, historical and geopolitical circumstances designates the condition for my art-making as individual. It is the mark of my artistic presence that is situated within my epoch, hence, collage/montage does not signal the death of painting. In my context, it is re-contextualised and woven into the expanded field (Krauss 1993, p. 41) of painting.

1.5 My PhD artwork as collage

Collage originates from the word 'coller', meaning glue in French (Douglas, Girard & Thompson 2001). In collage, many artworks are juxtaposed and repurposed to form one unique image. In the early 20th century, artists cut and glued newspaper, canvas and many other objects to create collage. For example Picasso's *The Guitar* (Figure 10) is an excellent example of the use of collage, specific to the appropriation of ready-made objects. In Shanks's terms, 'Collage...is direct quotation, literal repetition or citation of something taken out of its context and placed in another' (Shanks 1992, p. 149). He added that collage questions the notion of representation in order to establish connection with an exterior reality. Hence, the primary objective of collage is to construct something new out of the old via layering over with images or objects, to merge what may appear dissimilar in order to create new insights and understanding. Shanks (Shanks 1992, p. 149) views montage as cutting and rearranging fragments of images and quotations to generate a new composition. The operations of montage therefore use fragments as a visual device to reconstruct meaning. On the other hand, collage's visual characteristics do not emphasise visual fragmentation. My PhD artwork crosses boundaries between collage and montage. It is arguably collage because it produces visually new three-dimensional forms out of the polymer that is originally designed for two-dimensional art-making in order to question painting within its traditional premise.

In painterly terms, I perceive my use of collage as a form of direct quotation; a literal repetition or citation of something removed from its context and relocated to another environment. For example the polymer, with its original purpose being to fulfil the role of mark making in the two-dimensional domain, is transposed to satisfy the demands

of the three-dimensionality of my artwork. As mentioned earlier (see page 43), the polymer is also a reflection of my personal mark making in the expanded field of two-dimensionality. The line between the extension of painting and anti-painting is blurred in the transition of my art-making processes in this research. With reference to my PhD three-dimensional art, the use of montage incorporates the cutting and reassembling of fragments of meanings, images, things such as objects, quotations, and borrowings in the formation of new composition. This is evident in *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3i) where multiple fragments of polymer, each with specific significance, in the moment of its creation form the representation of the Photo Frame. The pieces of polymer in my artworks are abstract images that convey quotations from personal memories and narratives. In terms of my PhD art-making processes, the use of collage embodies separate and distinct thinking and emotion within each individually created layer. My artwork uses transparency as a means to interlock and connect with its external environment. Unlike collages that establish connection with exterior reality through the use of popular imagery, for example Kurt Schwitters usage of materials found on the streets in *The Kots Picture* (Figure 11), elements of popular culture are not employed in my creative work. With the purpose of creating something new out of the old, to connect what may appear dissimilar in order to achieve new insights and understanding, both art forms are means by which to question the nature of visual representation. I do not use recognisable visuals or images of popular culture because I want to use the materiality of the transparent polymer to represent my concept. In this context, the acrylic polymer and the fabric materials are representative of the industrial era in which I am located. Furthermore, I have been mindful of avoiding an aesthetic that might risk my artwork being associated with or being perceived as kitsch. The material for my creative montage is primarily

made and sourced by me. Although it is not specifically a found object, it is cutting from polymer pieces that I created out of a context within various modes of thought, for a work with another concept in mind.

My montage is the piecing together of many different concepts. It is the working of concepts within a concept that seemingly may not be aligned that intrigues and fascinates my creative sensibility. Synonymous with the strangeness in Surrealist painting, my working concept is to locate emerging and fascinating disconnectedness through the material processes. It is vital that I do not logically or consciously manufacture this surreal misalignment. Looking at *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3i), as mentioned, the polymer that was originally designed for two-dimensional painting is transformed into use for three-dimensional art. The polymer's usage slips from its place in the flat surface to the sculptural. It is montage not as in film art or painting; it is montage in the third-dimension. In art historical terms, Jean Dubuffet produced a series of collages of butterfly wings, which he titled *Assemblages d'empreintes* in the early 1950s. *Paysage (Landscape)*, executed in 1953, is one such example (Figure 12). Associate Curator of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, William Seitz (Seitz 1961) observed that Dubuffet had coined the term assemblage in 1953. However, in relation to artistic practice, Dubuffet was not the earliest assemblage artist. In Paris in the 1920s, Alexander Calder, Jose De Creeft and Pablo Picasso had all been working with found objects prior to Dubuffet.

1.6 Linkages to assemblage

Within art assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari's version of assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari 2003) is composed of heterogeneous elements or objects that lock into relations with one another. These objects are not all of the same nature, they can be physical objects, happenings, events, signs, utterances and so on. Assemblages are a chaotic network of habitual and non-habitual connections, perpetually in flux, always reassembling in different ways. The term 'constellation' (Deleuze & Guattari 2003, p. 399) is invoked when Deleuze and Guattari talk about assemblage. A constellation, like any assemblage, is constituted by imaginative reliant articulations amidst infinite heterogeneous elements. This process of arranging matter around a body is termed as coding (Deleuze & Guattari 2003, pp. 53–55). According to Deleuze and Guattari, assemblages are coded by taking a particular form via selection and compositional processes to complete a territory. In this context, assemblages are formed through the processes of coding, stratification and territorialisation. I use this form of coding in my PhD artworks by composing and arranging the polymer to create relationships between the materials to form visual meaning. The variety of connections that are formed by different viewers generates distinct meaning from an individual perspective. Assemblage theory is an approach to systems analysis that emphasises fluidity, exchangeability and multiple functionalities. Assemblages appear to be functioning as a whole, but are actually coherent bits of a system whose components can be pulled out of one system, 'plugged' into another, and still work. As such, assemblages characteristically have functional capacities but do not have a function; rather, they are designed to perform multiple tasks.

From the philosophical angle, the term assemblage originates from the French word *agencement*, which translates closely into English as arrangement, fitting or fixing. *Agencement* emphasises the intrinsic inference of the link between specific concepts. It is the composition of those concepts that offers sense or meaning. On the other hand, assemblage is more precisely defined as the fusion and linking of these concepts. Hence, it is both the linkages *and* the composition of those connections that form the context for assigned meanings. John Phillips (Phillips 2006, pp. 108–109) argued that Deleuze and Guattari seldom used the term assemblage in a philosophical sense. With close literal English/French translations, these two similar terms become misleadingly understood as equivalents. In English, the term assemblage has a more restricted range of use. As one of the noun forms of assemble, in the English language it refers to a collection of things. It is commonly used as a technical term, for example, to designate the collection of remains found on an archaeological site (French pronunciation: a-sā-blāzh). In art theory (in both French and English) assemblage is associated with collage and other avant-garde or pop art styles, defining works assembled out of diverse objects such as Jean Arp's *Trousse D'un Da* (Figure 5), an assemblage of driftwood nailed onto wood with some remnants of an old painting). As a tool for framing objects and operations of the social sciences, assemblage remains allusive. Its use as a translation of *agencement*, although not entirely without justification, nevertheless risked missing what is really vigorous with reference to Deleuze and Guattari's musings. Deleuze's work on *agencement* dates from the late 1960s, on the philosophy of Spinoza and the common notion. A common notion designates a situation when two or more bodies have something in common. All bodies have in common the states of extension, motion and rest; but when two or more bodies slip into a mode of exchange or enter into a relationship they form a

composition. A common notion depicts composition as an independent unity. It has a very specific inference to the notions of event, becoming and sense, which Deleuze discusses at length in other works in the same period. In my work *Hollow Painting I: Experiment on 08 February 2013* (Figure 13), the operation of *agencement* is characterised by the way in which the crystallisation of the bio-degradable is fused within the polymer to represent the natural aspect of my concept. My artwork in this context refers to the trace of my fragmented memory.

From the perspective of art assemblage, my artwork is an extension of collage/montage. In relation to Dubuffet's *Paysage* [Landscape] (Figure 12) and Jean Arp's *Trousse D'un Da* (Figure 5), the pieces of polymer are synonymous to both the tree bark and the butterfly wings. They are the multiple construct that forms meaning and visual sensation in repetition. Looking at *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3i), the multiple polymer fragments in their various incarnations become an individual object. They are glued together via the structure of the corrugated plastic roof material. The spaces in between the polymer fragments are the key difference. In Krauss' words, it is the 'expanded field' (Krauss 1993, p. 41) of painting. Within my PhD artwork, it is the extension from two- to three-dimensionality in painting that intrigues, challenges and excites. Through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari, my artwork as assemblage is the play of possibilities, structure, compositional organisation and change from two dimensions to three dimensions. In my PhD inquiry, assemblage facilitates an almost sculptural morphing and combination of montage with the reality of solid, hard physical environment. It is evident that my artwork includes putting together, arrangement, laying out, layout or fitting within the creative process. Furthermore, my artwork focuses on the significance of process. Therefore like

agencement, it is not about the static quality in art. Rather, it features the *process* of arranging, organising and fitting together. As a constellation of transparent polymer pieces, my expressive dimension is contingent on the imaginative self. Within my process of composing and arranging objects around the body, I have applied/enacted/worked with Deleuze and Guattari's coding. In this sense, the PhD assemblages are coded by taking a particular form via selection and compositional processes to complete a territory.

Seitz described the common physical characteristics of the artwork featured in the exhibition *The Art of Assemblage* in 1961 at the New York Museum of Modern Art as: 'instead of being painted, drawn, modelled, or carved, they are mainly assembled; entirely or in part, assemblages as being made up of pre-formed natural or manufactured materials, objects, or fragments not intended as art materials' (Seitz 1961). This is of distinctive difference to how Picasso used materials from popular culture and gave them new meaning in *The Guitar* (Figure 10), which resonates with how my artwork uses materials that are primarily created by me as an individual directive.

Art historian from Italy Christine Poggi sees these materials not as 'bits of reality' but them as 'circulating cultural signs, confiscated by Picasso in order to be redeployed in the world of high art... Within their new context, the prior meanings of these elements is partly effaced and new meanings are superimposed' (Poggi 1998, p. 47). It appears that the transparent nature of my polymer fragments mean that they carry limited cultural associations, such as an Ikea shower curtain in *Circus Tent* (Figure 14i). On the other hand, in *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3i), the cultural signs

attached to the smaller pieces of polymer are further reduced. However, visual meaning emerges from the interlocking layers of the transparent polymer. These fragments in Picasso's case are found objects, whereas the fragments in my PhD artworks are constructed from my personal reality. It is bits of reality that are concealed within the transparent nature of the polymer formed within my art process that is underpinned by my narrative and thinking in each piece. My artwork locates the internal reality of my fragmented self. They are the circulation of signs generated by my 'inward self' that exchanges with elements of the external world, for example the polymer material. Similarly, my processes are represented by layers of meaning related to the superimposed isolation of 'self', and it is an isolation that I perceive as originating from the desire of my inner personality. For me the use of montage within this PhD inquiry has been used to signal a semiotic fusion of the personal and the creative. My art-making as fragmented is represented by the use of montage because of its impromptu and irregular nature determined by the work hours of my full-time lecturing job at the university.

I perceive assemblage as representing the third dimension of visual fragmentation. I created 'broken' images in three-dimensional form as a means to establish spatial connections for the emergence of new visual concepts and meaning. This third-dimensional fragmentation of space in my assemblage work conceptually refers to the irregular time and space of my art practice. It is important for me to register how my ideas conceptually slip and re-establish themselves in-between space and time. I use the build-up of self-created polymer pieces to find connections to form a self-portrait in *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3i). This is similar to the way Benjamin uses fragments in the form of paragraphs of description and reflection and extracts of

text cited from critics, commentators, and historians to construct the *Arcades Project*. However, it is different from Picasso's and Braque's collage and montages because it only minimally involves the use of ready-made such as newspapers and objects. For example my artwork *Circus Tent* (Figure 14i), is the aesthetic of integration through the layering of transparent and semi-transparent polymer. The visual image it invokes is not only of a relationship of the juxtaposition of elements such as in the case of *The Guitar* (Figure 10) by Picasso, it is the experience of the interlocking layers via the transparent polymer.

Conceptually, framing my art processes through the lens of montage can be illuminated by utilising, understanding and accepting Benjamin's *flâneur's* random wandering through the arcades. These experiences in my PhD artworks are the processes used to create individual pieces of hand-crafted polymer. They are multiplied into the assemblage of transparent polymer, as artwork. Sorting out and composing my artwork is synonymous with walking through the arcades where passages through blocks of buildings are riddled with shops and other businesses, a montage of iron and glass assemblies are contained in a chaotic juxtaposition of shop signs, window displays of commodities, mannequins and illuminations. There are moments of conscious and subconscious input within the process that accumulate towards the formation my artwork. Conceptually, how I have worked with montage in my artwork parallels Benjamin's thought about the arcades. There is a sense of disorderliness within order. Elements of my painting are juxtapositions within the unfamiliar structure of three-dimensionality. Transparent polymer folds and flows between the different relationalities of flatness in painting and its extended three-dimensional form. Linearity is not central to my working processes; rather disruption

and distraction are key aspects of my working continuum. The *Arcade Project* or *Das Passagenwerk* (Benjamin 1999a), that Walter Benjamin never completed in his lifetime, is made up of fragments that include description and reflection and extracts of text cited from commentators, critics and historians. These fragments are organised by subject matter and catalogued into 28 different bundles (*'konvoluts'* or folders). There is also a fair amount of cross-referencing between individual fragments in different folders. Overall, it looks like a set of notecards for a history to be written. However, Benjamin was much against writing history in a way that advocated development, unfolding, emergence or progress. Arranging the bits and pieces of polymer in my artworks are synonymous with producing linkages that expand into meaning-making. From what he left at the time of his death in 1940, it is obvious that Benjamin's main objective was developing collage and montage as constructive principles for a progressive form of writing.

In my PhD artworks, the physical making processes of creating each polymer object is similar to Benjamin's random collection of fragments. Montage is woven within the task of assemblage, and the discordant production of polymer fragments interlinks unfamiliar visual forms. Cataloguing these fragments is likened to the operation of composing and process-based imagining of ideas and thinking in order to chart the emerging artistic concept in my mind. Dissimilar elements are drawn into a Deleuzian and Guattarian rhizomatic inter-connectedness (Deleuze & Guattari 2003). In this context, my artwork is assemblage/*agencement* and montage at the same time. The processes of arranging and fitting the disconnected polymer fragments are conceptualised as random entries of my consciousness slipping within the continuum of my art-making. The PhD artwork outputs involve the thinking of montage as the

constellation of fragments, *aperçus* (a comment or brief reference which makes an illuminating or entertaining point), swift shifts of thought, the establishment of relationships between disparate objects, across a whole environment. In the material sense of my artwork, the elements of these constellations are the polymer, fabric, colour, textile surfaces and spaces-in-between. They are static elements that register the twofold movement within the operations of my artistic creation, namely art-making as movement and spaces-in-between polymer as hidden liminal movement. This movement or slippage is the significant aspect of my PhD study in relation to montage.

1.7 Abstract expressionism, and its place within my inquiry

During the PhD study, I investigated the artwork produced by Robert Rauschenberg, specifically his works from the period 1953 to 1977. American abstract expressionism is important in my PhD inquiry because its influence on my earlier art practices forms the trajectory of my artistic development. As a student of Choong Kam Kow in LaSalle-SIA College of the Arts, flatness and formalism in painting conceptually formed the foundation of my intellectual journey in the visual arts. Issues relating to fluidity and the continuum between sketching and painting designated the next significant phase during my undergraduate study at the University of Tasmania. The notion of artistic signature also became significant during this period. Prior to undertaking this PhD study, fragment as citation, quotation and reference formed my artistic development. Artworks in the *Mickey Mouse* brush painting series in Figures 6 and 7 characterise the use of fragments in my artwork. The idea of emergence of concepts and thinking within art-making took form during a conversation with my former colleague John Matthews, an expert in early child development in art. As I expanded my two-dimensional painting into three-dimensional assemblage, issues relating to

combination painting and links to the sculptural domain became important in the development of my artistic practice. All these seemingly unrelated concepts and ideas weave into the topic of my PhD investigation.

The relationship of my art practice and that of Rauschenberg's combined painting *Bed* (Figure 4) is significant because the production of both of our artworks is the result of critical dialogue between painterly operation and the three-dimensional object. Both Rauschenberg's and my artworks are a developmental critique of abstract expressionism in an area such as flat space. For example, Rauschenberg uses a bed (in Figure 4), which is a physical object, to make commentary on the canvas surface whereas in *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3i), I use the paint pigment (polymer) that extends into three-dimensionality to form a dialogue with flatness. Rauschenberg is important in my analysis because his artwork provides the visual and conceptual reference point for my PhD investigation. It must be noted that my art practices that expand into the third-dimension are not as a direct influence from Rauschenberg's artwork. What is significant is that we are using different approaches to establish a visual dialogue with abstract expressionism. The dialogue within this crossing between Rauschenberg art and my inquiry generates slippage in terms of thinking, material usage and method in making.

It can be argued that abstract expressionism artistically develops from Euro-American practices in montage and assemblage and is an extension of collage. Greenberg's essay 'Modernist painting' (Greenberg 1992), with its multitude of connections to abstract expressionism, significantly influences my art practice until my art-making moves into the third-dimension. My artistic thinking is inspired specifically by Greenberg's citation on Kantian's criticism that emphasises 'the use of characteristic

methods of a discipline to criticise the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence' (Greenberg 1992, p. 179). Being trained as a painter, the critique of painting using two-dimensional rationalism ties my art practice closely to the development of abstract expressionism. My artwork evolves within the various constellations of the fragment or fragmentation of visual elements from painting to assemblage via collage.

1.8 Sensate and visceral in relation to abstract expressionism

The practices and issue of abstract expressionism is closely related to the sensate and visceral visual quality of my work – whereas Rauschenberg 'extended' the practices of collage and combining painting with painterly elements, my art practice is an extension of painting. Each piece of polymer is a representation of an individual brushstroke. It is an expanded field of painting and collage/montage (Krauss 1993). The sensate and visceral quality of my artwork register the aspect of visual movement (such as in Deleuze's analysis of Bacon's painting (Deleuze 2005), it is the head jumping out of the face). For my artwork, these qualities are embedded within the movement that is represented in the form of vibration seen in my artwork *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3i).

While the expressionistic aspect of the abstract expressionism is tied to the artistic style and signature, the sensate is interconnected to both values within the creative arts. Both myself and the abstract expressionist use automatism and free association to form linkages to the self and identity with material rendition and play. The sensate and visceral quality of my artworks is a reflection of my process-based art and it is

important to establish terms of reference from antecedent art practices for this PhD investigation.

1.9 Bridge as metaphor for crossing and slippages

If Rauschenberg's artwork is the bridge between art and life, my work is specifically concerned with bridging the present and the past. I created the *Bridge* (Figure 15) in this PhD study as a metaphor for slippage and transformation in my art practice. Conceptually, I view the bridge as a point of crossing where the lines in my sketches flow into painting, collages, montages and three-dimensional assemblage. I use the fragmented form to create the illusion of movement to visually represent the bridge in a state of flux.

It is a constellation of visual entries comprised of my inner dialogue within the different creative stages. The layers of polymer also characterise the tension between disruption and multi-interconnection. The bridge is the point of slippage, of different possibilities with creative play and of connection between the present and the past. In terms of my artistic practice, it is a site of non-linear continuum where growth and linear development in two-dimensional art-making are interrupted by the diversion into three-dimensional exploration. In the context of this research, the past is defined as conscious and subconscious inference to the remnants of my past artistic practices within my current creative practice. The bridge is synonymous with *agencement* where elements and values accumulated over the entire journey of my art-making find linkages or fusion either in practice or conceptually. These connections that slip from

one domain of practice to another are also critical aspects of the continuum in the development of my art practice.

1.10 Décollage

Mimmo Rotella is known for an art-making approach term as *décollage*. It is another variant of the collage method in art-making. In 1944, Rotella began to paint in an abstract geometric style that is half-way between the approaches of Paul Klee and the Second School of Paris. In 1945, he invented 'epistaltic' poetry. This is a combination of real and invented words and sounds underpinned by onomatopoeic repetition. He developed this phonetic poetry further during his trip to the United States (1951–1952). During this period, his acquaintance with artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, Jackson Pollock and Cy Twombly brought about the influence of American abstract expressionism in his *Materia 5* (Figure 16). His artworks during this period predominantly displayed qualities of painterly abstraction where characteristics of paint in its natural state engages the viewer. Elements of popular culture were not present in his painting. In my artwork, the expressive gesture of the artist is viewed significantly also as the artistic signature. Accidental discovery of new visual form within the expressive play of materials generates different thinking of concepts and meaning. However, my artwork does not involve the play of words in the pictorial sense. As a variant of collage, Rotella's artwork contextualises my art practices as another different collage. American abstract expressionism is a key marker in both Rotella's artistic development and my own. The passage into creating a variant collage points to similarity and also difference. Rotella's *décollage* is still in the domain of two-

dimensional art-making. In my PhD artworks, I have extended *décollage* into the three-dimensional form. For Rotella's art processes, he tears the movie posters into pieces and reworks them into another composition. In *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3i), I created the pieces of polymer as layers of painting and re-applied them in the construction and assemblage. It is a creative operation that draws reference from Deleuzian notions of 'becoming' (Deleuze & Guattari 2003), within which undoing is represented by the deterritorialisation of known artistic practice. In this investigation, it establishes a relational explanation of my painting's linkage to collage and assemblage.

I view American abstract expressionism as a point of crossing for Euro-centric ideas in visual representation. It is a site of exchange with Indigenous visual arts, a point that is characterised by new possibilities via overlaying and interlocking. The *Bridge* is a point that registers both crossing and connections of sketches, painting, montage, collage, assemblage, emergence and conceptual formation in my art-making. In conjuring different and new visual and conceptual possibilities, slippages occur in within this crossing.

1.11 Conclusion

My art practice is tied to a Deleuzian rhizomatic-interconnectedness within interlocking and layering of variant modes of art-making, philosophies, concepts and thinking. Underscored by the above, slippage randomly occurs along the crossing from two- to three-dimensional. This chapter established the relationship between my artworks and montage and the combination printing undertaken in the 1840s. My practice draws upon the concept of piecing together fragments of images to construct a

constellation/composition. Unlike montage that uses overlapping images as a means, combination printing interlocks layers of images to create relations of visual meaning. Extending into the operations of collage, my artwork is characterised by a visceral quality that highlights conditions for the working of artistic signature. My personal style is maintained by using abstract fragments in the artwork. Unlike collages that employ recognisable popular imagery, my collages connect the subjective inner-being of my artistic vision with the outside world. Likened to the arcade (Benjamin 1999a) in Benjamin's writing, they refer to the journey of the *flâneur* (Benjamin 1979) randomly finding connection to things and objects. The randomly picked objects form the fragments that consist of diaristic entries in bits of polymer within my artwork. In organising the transparent fragments of polymer into a composition, meanings are read through meaning. Interlocking visual form generates interwoven connections in creating deeper meaning of the past. In extending into three-dimensional assemblage, my artwork references Krauss' 'painting in the expanded field' (Krauss 1993, p. 38).

My art practice shifts and connects with the sculptural domain using the vocabularies of painting on canvases. My knowledge of painting has been reassembled to create assemblages. Pigment used for canvases has become sculptural material for three-dimensional art-making. Within my PhD artwork, heterogeneous elements or objects are locked into relations with one another. My process of arranging objects to create composition can be understood in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's coding. Linearity is not key to my artistic processes; rather randomness and disruption characterises the flow of my creative processes. These discordant art-making practices generate the visible sensate and visceral characteristics of my artwork. It multiplies and forms individual polymer objects (in Figure 17) within the assembly of the *Bridge*. Mimmo

Rotella's *décollage* is another variant of collage. His artwork makes a connection between destruction and reconstitution, and uses images from popular culture and 'epistaltic' poetry. Whereas Rotella reconstitutes his experience of American abstract expressionist art practices to create *décollages*, my PhD artworks engage the visceral aspect of art-making employing 'automatism' in a different way. This is Deleuzean 'becoming' (Deleuze & Guattari 2003) as characterised by the deterritorialisation of known artistic practice.

These multiple interconnections of ideas from antecedent art practices and writings form what can be termed 'bastardised' artworks in my studio practice. It is a result of my multicultural upbringing where perceived differences are potentially a source of different possibilities. The layering of transparent polymer characterises multiple distinct interlocking and connections in both visible and non-visually perceptible ways. Slippage emerges from these linkages. The sketches, collage, montage and assemblage that form the various stages of my art-making are synonymous with the layers of polymer that construct each of my artworks. Time can be read as space in-between the fragments. In developmental terms, my art practice simultaneously examines, and can be examined, through the interlocking lens. The random overlapping of transparent acrylic pigment represents the non-linearity of processes and thinking. Unlike the overlapping of opaque images, these see-through transparent layers presents interconnectedness through a different lens. It provides knowledge via inter-layer perception, for example the art form known as watercolour. It is seeing or visually making meaning from one layer through another layer, a parallel of 'intertextuality' in literary studies. It forms reading from one contextual understanding through another layer of content, allowing imagery or knowledge to form not only via

connection but also through multiple layers. In practice, the historian Richard White from Stanford University is already using this layering model to view the geo-historical development of civilisation through the sediments of earth layers.

Formlessness (transposition and art processes)

2.1 Introduction

After 40 years of artistic journey that have been fundamentally defined by formal education, my art practice is moving in a direction where boundaries are blurred between stylistic forms and where two- and three-dimensional art-making merges in both thinking and processes. This artistic direction, characterised by the development of my PhD research in process-based art, allows my working concepts and creative practices to traverse categories and definitions of traditional art forms. These processes have formed 'open-ended' images that create endless possibilities for further exploration and investigation in visual terms, emergence of ideas and philosophical thinking of concepts. In my PhD practice-led investigation, thinking around 'open-ended' visual representation naturally occurs along the path of 'praxis' (or practice). My work in this specific issue (of 'open-endedness') started in the two-dimensional field, before I embarked on the PhD study. The shift of my art practice from two- to three-dimensional art-making represents the 'undoing' of the foundation of two-dimensional art. This process constitutes what I term as a critique of the two-dimensional art-making process, and it forms an affinity with Bataille's writing on '*informe*' or 'formlessness'. Bataille speaks of '*informe*'s' objective as redefining a dictionary where words' meanings are not the objective but their tasks are the focus. The chosen term is not clearly defined but when it is transformed into the process, it is process that defines the term. My PhD art practice is related to this task or process-centric aspect of Bataille's writing. My ongoing art process is simultaneously operating

in relation to many alternatives of conceptual reformulation in my mind. It is not only the act of creating and critiquing as a combined operation, the process of aestheticising, the personality and specific thoughts of the artist are tangled into an undefinable term or operation.

Within the context of Bataille's writings about '*informe*', Rauschenberg's *Dirt Painting (for John Cage)* in Figure 18, for example, highlights the interconnection with issues pertaining to process-based art, impermanence, debasement and my artwork. In my creative processes, I am not conscious of permanence and the hierarchy of materials as the crucial part of the exploration. I perceive play and exploration potentially as an end product. What I am focusing on is the emergence within the seemingly meaningless fiddling with materials. The visual potential of the material that engages me in art-making marginalises issues of permanence or hierarchy of material.

In this PhD, I investigated transposition or crossing from two- to three-dimensional art-making. The process-centric nature of this change and my art-making is non-linear. I did not consciously build concepts upon earlier concepts. To use polymer to create assemblage is a deliberate ad hoc decision. For me, this is to create liberate accident similar to the art process of the Abstract Expressionist. The realisation that I created a three-dimensional artwork using painterly approaches only dawned on me as I reflected in the post-production phase. This personal ongoing task of 'discordant creativity' remains the crucial operation in '*informe*' and is an essential component of the PhD creative outputs.

2.2 Rauschenberg's *Dirt Painting*

Within the PhD study I investigated, as previously elaborated upon, the artworks produced by Robert Rauschenberg. For the purposes of this study I reviewed Rauschenberg's artworks from the period 1952 to 1977. For example his *Dirt Painting (for John Cage)* in Figure 18 bridges many of the practical and conceptual processes that I engage with in this research. *Dirt Painting* is closely associated with my work *Polymer and Coloured Rock* in Figure 19 because the material processes in art-making underpin both works. In my PhD art-making, play, exploration and understanding the working of materials are interconnections (constellations) that inform the art-making. The trigger for this visual play and exploration is both the visual inspiration from daily encounters and the conceptual meaning grasped from reading texts such as *Formless: a user's guide* (Bois & Krauss 1997) and *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia* (Deleuze & Guattari 2003). Rauschenberg uses the insignificant 'dirt' as a means to correspond and highlight the importance of the impermanence of process-based art. In my *Polymer and Coloured Rock* (Figure 19), the rock is used because it was discovered by accident. I believe that play which leads to accidents can inform, challenge and excite. The outcomes, when combined with academic research, often extend the PhD investigation through unknown territory such as slippage within my art practice. It was my visual engagement with a simple found rock that inspired the question of 'what would occur if I poured a layer of transparent polymer on the rock?' For me, the question of permanence of solidity and age never arose. What is important is a fundamental need to satisfy the curiosity of possible material play. In this context, the permanence of the material is not important in the initial stage. However, after the polymer had been layered over the rock, my thought processes slipped into the question of the permanence of the polymer in relation to

the rock. This triggered the idea of transferring the elements/pigments of the rock to the transparent acrylic layer (when it is peeled). My thinking process focused on what the relationship between the rock and the polymer has created. In fact, my fascination with the discovery of this primitive 'printmaking' method is tied to how linkages between object and materials form possibilities. Synonymous to the open-ended relationship of my sketches and painting, it is the visual and conceptual potential in its fluid stage that I value in art-making.

Similar to the 'dirt' that Rauschenberg used in his *Dirt Painting*, my artwork employed a 'worthless' found rock that is a mixture of dirt and clay. In art-making, within the PhD artworks I do not distinguish between materials, whether it be man-made or from nature. Just as Rauschenberg set out to eradicate the traditional hierarchical understanding of materials that existed between art and life (Hopps 1991), there is also no hierarchy in material for me. In a 1987 interview, Rauschenberg remarked to Barbara Rose that 'There's no such thing as "better" material. It's just as unnatural for people to use oil paint as it is to use anything else' (Rose 1987, p.58). In *Polymer and Coloured Rock* (Figure 19), the focus is primarily on exploring the relationship of the transparent polymer on the found rock. It is my material play of layering of man-made material on nature to understand the visual tension, the effect and conceptual potential of the polymer.

2.3 Georges Bataille's 'formlessness' and 'not locked in terms of definition'

Within my creative making process two to three-dimensional art-making is a task or creative operation that symbolically reflects the development from the past to the present. It is also a process of 'undoing' the institution of two-dimensional art, such as

painting. This methodology is a critique of the process of two-dimensional art-making using the three-dimensional art-making process, and is conceptually closely linked to Bataille's writing on '*informe*' or 'formlessness'. For Bataille, *informe*'s objective is to redefine a dictionary where the meaning of words is not the focus; rather their task is emphasised (Bataille 1985a). The designated term is not assigned a clear set of meanings, but would transform it into the processes they already should be. Therefore, *informe* is primarily task-orientated. The title of *Attempt to Create Harmony* (Figure 20i) indicates the significance of the process in the artwork by using the word 'attempt' as my artistic consciousness. This artwork is therefore a work-in-progress with many other attempts concurrently evolving in my mind. In my art-making, it is not only the task of forming and critiquing as a combined form in operation, the processes of aestheticising whether conscious or subconscious and the personality and specific thoughts of the artist is tangled into an undefinable term or operation.

2.4 Within the context of *informe*, investigating transposition from 2D to 3D: The ongoing task of 'discordant creativity' remains the crucial operation of *informe*

Task within *informe* is transcribed to the process of conceptual transposition in my artwork. *Attempt to Create Harmony* (Figure 20i) is composed through montage of rectangular translucent paper over the drapery-like transparent polymer material at the right side of the work. The irregular organic forms that are distributed spatially in an almost straight line suggest the feeling of strangeness and a transposition of one state to another. From the 'spit' of red on the ground, to the seemingly highly formed element suspended on the wall with the rectangular semi-transparent paper and thereafter, the dripping piece that is connected with the brown 'vomit' on the floor, this line runs from the base towards the wall and back to the bottom. This transposition evokes a sense

of life and moving in the evolutionary continuum. The artwork's form is both generating and degenerating at various stages. This reordering of painting that stretches from the wall to the floor is therefore lowering the physical viewpoint. It engages the viewer with the visual elements below eye level. In addition, what is intended to look like 'vomit' on the floor symbolises the transposition and lowering of painting as high art to a distasteful human excrement. It echoes Rauschenberg's *Dirt Painting* in the use of worthless and degenerate material as such filth, regarded as the lowly things of society. The task of painting for me is not locked within a set definition, it slips into the operations of three-dimensional art-making.

The red piece, that is also the smallest and 'purest' in the sense that its colour remains unmixed with the 'other', seems to be evolving into the more complex structure that reaches the pinnacle on the highest point of the installation on the wall. This also illustrates the movement from the lowly floor to its high point on the wall and then degenerating back to the ground level. The work, as it stretches across from the domain of the wall (vertical) to the domain of the floor (horizontal), engages the discourse on art that crosses from the X to the Y axis. The work is positioned below eye-level, deliberately engaging the viewer in the downward view and can be explained through Bataille's notion of lowering (Bataille 1985a).

In transposing the polymer from its original use on canvas to function as three-dimensional material, I am not only transforming the polymer's use, I am lowering the materiality of its adhesive purpose to ground zero, totally ignoring its function in the creation of my PhD assemblage. This is the task of redefining, transposition and lowering in material terms.

2.5 Lowering

Bataille rationalised *informel*/formlessness as ‘a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing has its form’ (Bataille 1985a). With this artwork, it is not only the lowering of sight from the position of a standing viewer but is it also the lowering of the value of the work itself, a lowering of idealism (Bataille 1985a). This is also associated with the visual characterisation of the polymer. For example, in reviewing Figure 20ii, the surface quality of the dark brown polymer appears as a human vomit, which connotes something that is lowly in value. The installation’s overall view evokes a sense of instability, incompleteness and impermanence. It triggers the vision of the unformed that also added to the debasement of its significance.

Earlier in this exegesis, I elaborated on how my art-making is intuitive in manner, exploring the possibilities of ideas, concepts and processes. The reason behind this approach is that, from my professional experience, ideas originating from the processes of reason are often dull and result in artwork constrained in anticipation of a logical trajectory, whereas ideas that emerge from intuitive embrace of chance encounters with objects, creating opportunities for more meaningful art-making with often unexpected results. I believe the use of reason in creating visual problems and issues for examination that are external to the self is not natural. One could argue conversely that reason is natural when creating artwork that is underpinned by the notion of self. On the other hand, the use of curiosity to register emerging visual aesthetics is a more naturalistic approach. I find myself naturally drawn to engage with the visual of the natural chaos that surrounds me. Although art-making for me is not

directly linked to survival in the animal world, it is my personal and inherent primal nature that establishes meaning between the visual aspect and the external environment. Beyond the use of sight, the sense of touch is employed in the creation of my three-dimensional art. My processes with the paint medium extend from using brushes and a palette knife as indirect rendering of the pigments to direct tactile play with the pieces of polymer using my hand. This bodily sensitivity interlocks with primal encounters that register the emergence of visual challenges to form artistic expression as a response. Grosz (2008) brings further context to this idea in her writing:

‘Art is of the animal. It comes, not from reason, recognition, intelligence, not from a uniquely human sensibility, or from any of man’s higher accomplishments, but from something excessive, unpredictable, lowly’ (Grosz 2008, p. 158).

This ‘excessive, unpredictable, lowly’ notion resonates and is characterised within the working of polymer in my PhD artwork. Grosz pointed out that art is a result of excess in the world, the living thing and the object. This empowers them to be more than what they are, giving more than themselves, stretching both material properties, qualities and their possible use to beyond what they are. Hence, art is a product of excess in which energy or lifeforce subject life at risk for the purpose of intensification, for the sake of sensation itself and not for sexuality and pleasure as psychoanalysis advocates (Grosz 2008). It is that which can be possibly magnified and intensified. On top of that, via the process of creation, risk-taking and innovation are undertaken for their own sake. This expands the discussion of Bataille’s idea of lowering into four operations, namely ‘base materialism’ (the ‘low’ of idealism), the horizontal (the ‘low’

to vertical's 'high'), pulse (the low form to the high of steady meaning) and lastly, entropy, the counterpart to accumulation (of form).

2.6 Base materialism and Bataille

'Base materialism' refers to a materialism that would purge all idealism, conceptualisation or formalism. Hence, the *informe* is the lowering of form (Bataille 1985b), an adaptation into physical matter, so that material remains as material. In this sense, *Attempt to Create Harmony* (Figure 20i) is seen as escaping all idealism because the materials of my artwork are not classified in terms of value. In addition, the medium and the visual form of my artworks do not conceal its materiality. In this case, figuration in meaning formation is not involved. In my PhD artworks, the natural folding of polymer in drapes is what I do not want to control or manipulate. Within the context of the Deleuzean fold, it is characterised by both folding inwards and outwards (depending on the direction of one's viewpoint). It is crucial to note that the folds of the polymer in their true physical nature are represented as my art piece.

With reference to base-materiality, the fold in its natural form highlights its physical property, for example, its malleable quality. Furthermore, the different folds are formed via the polymer's intrinsic material properties through its relationship with the gravitational pull of the environment. In this case, it is structured through my conceptualisation of flatness across the vertical and horizontal axis, resting on the floor and the lower part of the exhibition wall. The semi-opaque rectangular paper, contrasted with the polymer's transparent character, provides the comparative element in visual terms. This is conceptually premised on how my PhD artwork naturally interconnects with its surrounding space. In other words, the material of the

artwork is represented in such a way as to reveal its natural attributes. For anything to remain excluded from the world of form requires that it stay as a process, purging the imposition of form at all stages. In real terms, this is virtually not possible and any attempt can only end in failure. This failing is formlessness/*informe*. On the provision that 'base material' artwork is the play of failures, one should attempt also to locate what fails to come to form or formlessness.

2.7 Conclusion

My PhD artwork is conceptualised as 'open-ended' in the search for endless visual possibilities. With my emphasis on a process-centric approach to art-making, it transgresses commodification with the creation of assemblages that are impermanent. Ideas in my mind are obscure and underpinned by excesses of concepts. Meaning in art-making becomes the task of uncovering emergence through practice. My creative processes are also directly or indirectly a critique of my past artistic creation. The tangling of my personality and the abovementioned is synonymous with Bataille's *informe* debasement and impermanence. With exploration and play as key in my art processes, hierarchy of materials in my art are immaterial. The use of found objects such as a worthless rock in my exploration assign value in both impermanence and non-issues such as hierarchy of material matter. In forming linkages with the subject that I am investigating, slippages occur within the interconnections with questions that are highlighted during the exploration and play of polymer and the rock. The 'open-endedness' triggers the thinking of other possibilities when a printmaking method is realised during the investigation. The fluidity between processes, concepts and future possibilities remains the crucial aspect of my art practice.

The transposition of my art-making from two dimensions to the third dimension constitutes the 'undoing' of tenets of flat surface art-making. In reflection, *Attempt to Create Harmony* (Figure 20i) is conceptually designated as an artwork to draw the sense of transposition in visual terms. The 'vomit' element on the ground area characterises the worthless and degenerate association the artwork is based upon. Secondly, the transposing of the polymer from its original function on canvas by stripping its adhesive properties is debasing and lowering the material in the creation of my artwork. In visual terms, the polymer displays its materiality in its natural condition. Bataille is not concerned with 'form' and 'content' but in the operation that dislocates both of these terms. In this process of slippage we see an account of what Bataille calls the *informe*. Although critics depict Olympia's body as a rotting corpse which is 'formless', Manet is not the precursor of *informe*. To clearly define the genealogy of *informe* would be problematic because it is an operation that neither has a theme nor a substance nor a concept and that 'to this end it participates in general movement of Bataille's thought, which he liked to call "scatology" or "heterology" (and of which historically the *informe* constitutes the first operation specified in his writings)' (Bois & Krauss 1997, p. 18). Krauss pointed out that slippage towards the lowest Olympia is apparent in its various incarnations by artists from Manet (Figure 21) to Dubuffet (Figure 22) and Cy Twombly (Figure 23).

Within my artistic development, ideas and material form transpose through various bodies of my artwork. For example, the drape-like fold in Figure 14ii appears to relate to my earlier cloth painting in 2009 (Figure 24). Interestingly, the use of bleached cotton cloth that substitutes the tradition of using silk to mount Chinese painting, is also a lowering of idealism.

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, the discussion of my artwork highlighted the dislocation of ‘form’ and ‘content’ through issues relating to transposition and process-based art. This artistic operation in my PhD study not only trespasses established boundaries of formalistic concern, it enables slippages between different projected visual meanings, concepts and expressive characteristics of two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms, including high and low art. It also characterises the continuum between my sketching and painting processes as creative operations that cross porous boundaries. In my use of the PhD art material, porosity refers to something with a permeable physical attribute. For example, just as water flows easily through a porous sponge, the transparent polymer used within PhD artworks are material with physical characteristics that allow light to easily pass through surfaces. This chapter investigates the attributes of porosity through the material aspect of my artwork, the art processes in its fluid dimension and the meaning that slips between different perspectives. This porous condition established in my PhD artwork generates new constellations and possibilities that are reflected in Deleuze’s philosophy of becoming.

Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis (Benjamin 1999e) characterise the environment and architecture of **Naples, Italy** as ‘porous’, explaining that its built environment denies any fixed or designated functionality. The term ‘porosity’ or ‘porousness’ has come into use in the English vocabulary of architecture and urban planning from the German

(*Porosität*) of Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) the German essayist, philosopher and social critic. In architecture, ‘porous’ means that the structures resist well-defined function, for example, one can build a park, but people use it in any way they desire. Just as Benjamin mentioned that ‘As porous as this stone is the architecture’ (Benjamin 1999e, p.416), this particular characteristic of porosity, usually bound within the discourse of architecture, is in fact relevant in the discussion of my PhD painting processes and assemblages.

In the essay of Naples (Benjamin 1999e), Benjamin highlighted porosity in spatial and temporal terms. Spatially the architectural condition of Naples is porous in its mingling of private and public, for example the home spills out into the street. This intermingling of private and public is iterated in Benjamin’s (1999e) work where ‘what distinguishes Naples from other large cities is something it has in common with the African Kraal; each private attitude or act is permeated by streams of communal life. Here, there is interpenetration of day and night street and home’ (Benjamin 1999e, p.417-18). In examining the porous condition of Naples, Benjamin saw an alternative side to it. The opportunity for improvisation and unexpected movement around the city also provided the conditions for organised crime of the mafia style *Camorra*. This is a porous space for problem-solving, and the subsequent emergence of unexpected visual challenges resonates with Deleuze’s writing on ‘becoming’ as a process. The interconnection with different art-making approaches from sketches to assemblage blur boundaries between different domains of knowledge in the continual understanding/learning of self through practice in visual art. Here, Benjamin registered three intersecting networks of power in Naples, namely the church, the *camorra* and the fascist state whereby the border in-between these powers became porous. Similarly, there are

also three aspects in a triadic relationship that determine my artistic product, namely random procedures, pragmatic decisions in artistic approaches and problem-solving to bridging these differences to create meaning within the site of my art-making. In material terms, the wavy property of the corrugated clear polycarbonate roofing sheet (Figure 26) provides the porous condition for the polymer fragments to inter-penetrate the positive and negative space of the assemblage. This interplay of space with the corrugated structure generates a visual slippage, where visual materials radiate from the linear projection of perspective. The investigation of this porous quality includes and places emphasis upon processes in relation to the notion of end product. The study of different projected visual meanings in my artwork interrogates operations between conceptualisation and expressiveness as it entangles within my creative processes. This interrogation focuses on the space between the two- and three-dimensional aspects of my artistic production, extrapolating the threshold between high and low art.

3.2 Material and porosity

The polymer material (Figure 25) that I use is translucent. When the pigment is thinner, it borders on being transparent. This material is porous because light can pass through it, altering its visual characteristics from different angles of viewpoint. The naturalistic ruptures also allow the material to form a visual relationship with its background. The cracks of the worked polymer are not intentional in my creative processes, rather they are formed in the areas where volumes of bio-degradable detergent exceed the thin mixture of the polymer. Upon removing the dried polymer from the stainless steel table, those areas with thinner polymer allow for cracking and tearing. It is in this porous condition that the slippage occurs in my artwork. Hence,

the action and meaning of my PhD artwork slips variably from one constellation to another, contingent upon the perspective from which the viewer encounters the artwork.

The other important aspect of my artwork concerns weaving the condition of porosity of materials with physically looking-through into the background space. I use the weaving of material to emphasise form and facilitate encounter and making meaning of the artwork from its material condition in relation to the surrounding space that houses the art piece. Making meaning alternates between aspects of the positive space of my artistic creation and the negative space of its environment. Viewing from varied angles enables different interpretation and significance for the audience. The viewer, the artwork and the space form a triadic porous relationship, where the visual meaning created is distinct and individual. Ownership of my artwork's meaning is surrendered to the individual, whereby their unique history, experience in life and imagination becomes an inherent part of the meaning made from formation of aesthetic and conceptual experience. Though my purpose in this research is to expound the meaning within slippage of transposing my earlier painterly art practices to three-dimensional art making in the current PhD investigation, I acknowledge that the individual interpretation of meaning that I sought to communicate is existentially outside my control. It is this element of the artistic unknown, that I find challenging and it is formative in the development of my future creative research direction.

3.3 Visual form and multiple meanings

It is always my desire to create artwork that is refreshing within the art historical context of art practices. The notion of what constitutes innovation and to whom we assign it in art-making becomes contentious across the breadth and depth of 4000 years of art-making in human history. Hence, the concept of unfolding a constellation in art that problematises thresholds between dimensions appeals to me. My PhD art-making in this context is structured upon the creative tension between the fluid, random approaches and logical and practical method in the formation of the visual experience. In Benjamin's writing, 'building and action interpenetrate in the courtyards, arcades, and stairways' (Benjamin 1999e, p. 416) in ways that resonate with my own art-making where I seek to attribute an indeterminate demarcation between artistic processes and creative thinking. This led to a creative operation that is open-ended, and very often resulted in artwork that resisted my original conceptual intention. For example, in *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3ii), the use of corrugated clear polycarbonate roofing sheet (Figure 26) with polymer fragments produced visual qualities that went beyond my expectation. This excess presented itself within the visual characteristics of the clear polycarbonate roofing sheet. The ways in which perspectives can generate visual movement not only fascinated me but also surprised me with their emergent capacities and qualities. The clear polycarbonate roofing sheet's transparent quality enabled a porous relationship to emerge, with the pieces of polymer forming new visual constellations. The wavy structure of the roofing sheet in relation to its transparent aesthetic are two dynamic conditions that interplay with the paint pigment, generating visual qualities that appear to be randomly structural (see Figure 3ii).

3.4 Creating an environment and spaces for fluidity and the unexpected

In the fluidity of my art processes, stages of thinking and art-making are not clearly delineated in my ensuing artworks. What appears to be practical operation in the creation of my PhD artwork is often layered with consideration for other alternative approaches in the making of the art pieces. The creative space in both the mental and physical domain allows arbitrary decision-making to interact with the pragmatics of creating the artwork. It is synonymous with Benjamin and Lacis' reading of Naples (Benjamin 1999e) where fluid definition of space is possible due to the nature of the architectural structure, for example the state of the architecture being built crosses boundaries to the condition of decay and ruination. This is similar to the relationship between my sketches, painting and assemblage. In visual terms, incompleteness connotes a sense of ruination and decay in *Unconscious Dialogue 7* (Figure 1). In this work, the differentiation and threshold between incompleteness and completeness is not clear. In this space between incomplete/complete, a sense of porosity inflects between my sketches and painting. When the idea of my PhD art-making is vague, it provides the porous space for subsequent artistic developments to emerge. In other words, porosity creates a context whereby I am not sure how my final art product will turn out. It is this uncertainty that in turn compels me to choose, that shapes my process. This liminal space between the various modes of my artistic creation is examined in the final portion of this chapter. My art processes are synonymous with Deleuze's 'becoming' as a process because the uncertainty created via the porous condition in my artwork conjures emergence in the passage of art-making.

Benjamin and Lacis (Benjamin 1999e) perceived the porosity of stone as synonymous with the condition of architecture in Naples. In this space, buildings and human actions interweave in the courtyards, arcades and stairways. In everything they preserve the condition to become a theatre of new and sometimes unforeseen constellations. In this context, the definitive is circumvented. No situation appears intended forever. This is how architecture, the most binding of all communal rhythms, came into being here, Benjamin and Lacis describe the city of Naples in both spatial and temporal terms. They pointed out that the city is in a continual process of discontinuous transformation: 'Porosity is the inexhaustible law of life in this city, reappearing everywhere' (Benjamin 1999e, p. 417). They explain further how the stamp of the definitive is avoided, giving rise to the passion for improvisation. In Naples, porosity and transience manifest: 'Balcony, courtyard, window, gateway, staircase, roof are at the same time stage and boxes' (Benjamin 1999e, pp. 417–418). The city is not homogenous but porous in its mingling of private and public spaces. Nothing ever seems 'fixed'; architecture is always in the process of being built or in decay and ruination and in this way it continually and infinitely evades being conclusive. Premised upon the 'open-ended' concept mentioned in Chapter 4, my PhD artworks are created in the liminal space between being built and decaying in architecture.

3.5 Porosity: Between processes and end product

The state without temporal fixity in my PhD art-making is characterised by the ambiguous relationship between process-based art that is commonly defined as incomplete and polished, a completed end product. Just as the human activity in

Benjamin's reading of Naples surpasses its original designated function for the space, there is no clear-cut delineation of my different creative phases. In Benjamin and Lacis' words, 'the home spilled into the street' (Benjamin 1999e, pp.417-418), and within my art processes completeness spills into incompleteness. Ideas, concepts, meaning and artistic processes in my art remain fluid and indistinct. The notion of a complete artwork is never a part of my creative endeavour. Therefore, my artwork may appear to be completed in the eye of the viewer but for me, it is not a 'full-stop', it is just a 'comma' awaiting more intervention and re-creation. For *Circus Tent* (Figure 14i), my desire is to add more visual elements in-between the layers of polymer. My thinking for this artwork hovers between complexity and simplicity. Conceptually, my artwork remains in a state of flux where I continue to think of the artwork and develop it in action and in relation to the development of the creative thinking.

3.6 Porosity: Between concept and expressiveness

An artwork that does not distinguish between completeness and incompleteness is what I perceive as a 'breathing' artwork, within which interactions between concept and expressiveness remain fluid and porous. Here, expressiveness can be defined in relation to the American abstract expressionists' search for the individual signature expression. In *Hollow Painting I* (Figure 13) and *Processed polymer with bio-degradable detergent and plastic lace* (Figure 25), bio-degradable detergent is used to generate visual forms that are organic and reminiscent of humans. This is the way I link my three-dimensional art to the act of painting by humans, where the concept of my artwork is punctuated by a naturalistic visual quality. This is very important because I am, paradoxically, working with polymer, a material that appears plastic and synthetic. It is this tension between organic and synthetic that a porous space of

possibly emerges; a space that bridges the synthetic and naturalistic, between the plastic concept of the polymer and the vein-like disruptions from the bio-degradable detergent. I conceive conceptualisation as conscious building blocks of ideas that are characterised by the thinking process in my artistic creation, whereas artistic expression that is underpinned by automatism is understood as unconscious intellectual presupposition. When both conscious and subconscious thinking in respective terms such as conceptualisation and expression interconnects, it results in the formation of the unexpected. In my creative processes, porosity between concept and expression is vital in the creation and discovery of new approaches and ideas for my art-making. This porous condition establishes a space for fluidity of ideas and the realisation of the unexpected in the visual form that I created.

3.7 Conclusion

In defining porosity, a term that Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis used in the discussion of Naples in both spatial and temporal terms, my PhD artwork is porous in the intermingling between expression, concepts and processes. Just as Benjamin registers the opportunity for improvisation and unexpected movement around the city, the porous condition of my art practices makes provision for emergence and new discoveries such as the vein-like visual quality of the biodegradable detergent through exploration and play within the continuum of different approaches in art-making from sketches to painting, collage, montage and three-dimensional assemblage. These biological visual forms link my artistic expressiveness to the conceptualisation of my artwork. The different methods in my studio practice formed an intersecting creative force generating new concepts and expression in my artworks. The borders in-between different modes of artistic creation become porous because of the triadic

relationship between random procedures, pragmatic decision-making and problem-solving. The choice of material used in my artwork, for example, the corrugated clear polycarbonate roofing sheet, creates the porous condition for the polymer fragments to inter-penetrate the positive and negative space of the assemblage. The examination of different projected visual meanings interrogates operations between conceptualisation and expressiveness as they intertwine in my art-making processes. This interrogation is extended to focus on the space between the two- and three-dimensional aspects of my artistic production, extrapolating the threshold between high and low art.

The degree of transparency of the polymer determines the level of porosity in my artwork. Naturalistic ruptures allow more light to pass through areas of my artwork, interconnecting and creating unexpected constellations with its background space. Conceptually, it is important that my artwork weaves into the background in establishing the porous condition that is characterised by random visual composition. For the viewers, making meaning alternates between aspects of the 'positive space' of my artistic creation and the negative space of its surrounding. A triadic porous relationship is created between the viewer, the artwork and the space whereby unique and individual meaning is formed by the audience. Ownership of my artwork's meaning is yielded to the individual, interlocked and reshaped by their unique history, experience in life and imagination. The emergence of this unknown relationship and meaning in my artworks are tied to the aim of my PhD investigation whereby no answer are found but more questions are generated. I recognise this problem creation as the intrinsic aspect of becoming within this investigation. Hence, their distinct

constitution becomes an essential component of the meaning made from the formation of aesthetics and conceptual experience.

My art-making in this PhD investigation is structured upon the creative tensions between the fluid, random approach and logical and practical methodology of sketching, painting, collage, montage and assemblage in creating the desired visual experience. Just as Benjamin and Lacis refer to Naples where building and action interpenetrate in the courtyards, arcades and stairways, I am conceptually creating artworks whereby unknown demarcation between artistic processes and conceptual thinking are key characteristics. The creative space in both the mental and physical domain that allows arbitrary decision is porous. My art-making crosses boundaries between the processes of being created and the end product. The arbitrary relation created in the space between complete and incomplete embodies porosity. It generates an abstract space for new possibilities and subsequent artistic development in my art practice. This is also a fluid space that embodies continual drive to form different interconnections in term of artistic approaches and beyond the domain of visual arts. In my art-making, layering and weaving of concept and expressiveness creates a tension between organic and synthetic visual form that is porous and slippery. This difference is registered between my artwork undertaken before and during my PhD study whereby continuity, development is characterised by changes in spatial orientation, material used and creative approach. Slippage occurs within transposition in artistic concept, expressiveness and working method in art-making. This practice-led visual art investigation is porous because the fluidity between creative practice, reading from scholarly texts and writing forms a slippery interconnect within an infinite continuum.

In conclusion, I offer a summation and evaluation of the arguments that are represented in this PhD exegesis. The discoveries that I have identified from this PhD practice-led research project contribute toward an added dimensional understanding in artistic production via the perception and aesthetic in layering vision. The investigation of the layering of creative in-between space in my present and past artistic practices employs three distinct topics that simultaneously hold their own space and at moments entwine, namely 'shift/slippage from drawing to painting, collage, montage and assemblage'; 'formlessness (transposition and art processes)'; and 'slippage and porosity'.

This research expounds my current creative practice in relational term with previous concepts and methods in art-making that are contextualized within the practices of other artists and published writings by Walter Benjamin, Georges Bataille and Gilles Deleuze. The research contemplates an artistic position that does not discriminate between sketches, painting, montage and assemblage. In doing so, this investigation explores issues such as 'formlessness' in the framework of transposition, and slippage in relation to porosity within the procedural application of transparent polymer and other materials such as cloth for three-dimensional painting.

The significant result of this research is the development of a visually inimitable artistic perception and art practice, evolving in process through layers of transparency to cloud the division between two- and three-dimensional art forms. The research explores by thorough investigation of creative practice as a layered differentiation, using interwoven creative approaches that challenge the threshold between two- and three-dimensional conceptual thinking, materials and approaches. Within my practice-led research the redemption of slippage and the comprehensive exploration of the layered space between various materials and art-making methods, positions us to make multifaceted visual renderings of the value between two and three-dimensional data. The research outcome produced reflects the diversity and interconnectivity that is generated when layers impact, entangle and dissect.

The introduction offers an overview of the existing research that has explored aspects of the slippages between present and past. Situated within the shortfall of inquiry around this topic in a visual arts context, my practice-led research study bridges the knowledge gap through disruptive applications of concepts and ideas on the excesses of meaning in a creative and innovative investigation. This investigation emerges from my inquiry into artistic practice that sought to shift from the two- to three-dimensional domain. It is structured upon the emergent visual semiotic arising from my art practice, reading and writing.

I have employed a practice-led research model as an approach to situate this inquiry due to its qualities as a naturalistic tool for a practice-based painter such as myself. This research method operates in a cyclical form. To elaborate from the perspective of creative practices, my method emerged from knowledge in the form of new ideas

and disrupted concepts as opening my approaches to art-making, and in turn these new values were naturally recycled back into my later art-making. Hence, I have come to understand this model of practice-led research approach as a model for lifelong learning in education.

Within my introduction, I established a working definition of the term slippage, specific to the concept of art-making and relevant published literature on the theoretical beliefs concerning Walter Benjamin's use of 'distraction' slips in meaning. I became immersed in Benjamin's later writing that alludes to a dependency upon his earlier thinking. This is based on my belief that concepts and ideas perpetually slip from time to time in the mind of creative individuals. To provide the context for this PhD direction, the introduction gives credence to the artistic style of many artists from the early 20th century to the present time that slips from one to another and that has been documented via published writing. My PhD research demonstrates how the widely held notion that artists predominantly work in a single style can be made porous and eroded. In my introduction, I sought to elaborate on how some creative historians, and artists, argue that this is a representation of post-modernity in art-making.

In Chapter 2, I established the fluid relation between my sketching, painting, montage (underpinned by my admiration of combination printing from the 1840s), collage and assemblage in my art process. This continuum between the various domains of creative practices in my art-making is also common among many artists, and these have been discussed, elaborated and remarked upon throughout the writing. However, it is also important to note that slippages occur within the thin borders in-between different types of art practices. These threshold opportunities and their disruptive

potential provided a fertile ground upon which to grapple with the applications of concept and ideas outlined in my introduction. Fragments within montages are construed as lines in sketches. In my PhD artworks, the layers of polymer can be taken to operate in a similar way to pigment upon canvas surfaces. It is here with the layering between that I find a true fascination within art-making and in many ways this honesty of merging material is the core essential ingredient of my creative research. I believe within the layering of physical materials, much like an archaeological investigation, we can see the essence of history, lives engaged and love lost.

The applications of fabrics within the pieces of polymer was originally intended as a subtle decorative marker for the PhD artworks. However, in my reflection back upon and into the physical making process, I realised that it also reflected back upon my last two bodies of work (series) where I employed Chinese brush painting that utilised cloths as part of its conceptual device. In this space, the material concept of my earlier two-dimensional artwork slips subconsciously into my recent three-dimensional art practice. This sculptural art form that I am making is both a montage and collage in the third dimension because it uses unrelated fragments of polymer created during different time periods to form a recognisable object. For example the *Three-Dimensional Photo Frame* (Figure 3ii) adopted another hallmark of my use of montage, where the manipulation of light turquoise on the bottom right hand corner of the artwork creates contrast while at the same time disrupts the regularity of perception.

This fluidity of my artistic processes developed within this PhD investigation extends upon my affinity with Hippolyte Bayard's combination printing in the 1840s. Arguably

the earliest form of photo-montage, I drew from the type of combination printing that uses two or more negatives in overlapping ways to form an idealised image. This is similar to the way I employ transparent and translucent polymer in an interlocking manner to form my three-dimensional artworks. For me, the intertwining of polymer fragments represent time in the non-linear continuum of artistic processes from one period to another. As emphasised, it is the crossover of timelessness that I find of interest in my creative research. The many layered effects of polymer paint and the physical activity of the making process reflects the impacts of time as an ageing process, but also gives excitement to a future focussed sensitivity.

Unlike Miró, who perceived collage as a signal to the death of painting, I view my three-dimensional artwork as painting that extends into the domain of collage. While Miró sees the embracing of mass-produced images in collage as representing the removal of artistic signature, my PhD artwork uses many pieces of individually produced polymer fragments characterised by the identifiable brush-mark of the artist. These fragments in my creative artwork are individual images that represent the moment of creative production and implicitly contain the unheard voice of the artist. My artwork is defined as collage because the polymer material that is intended for acrylic painting on a flat surface is removed from its original purpose to fulfil the demand of my three-dimensional artwork. However, my creative artwork is also different to collage because it does not employ popular images in order to find its connection with external reality. The connectivity with elements of the external world is not through the use of recognisable images but via its material linkages with the development of polymer in industrial terms, conceptual foci and physical matter.

These multiple interconnected linkages of my artistic practice are also 'linked' to assemblage. Conceptually speaking, my thinking weaves within Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of assemblage that is characterised by messy networks, constantly in the flux of becoming, non-linear and in disarray. This becoming is a slippery movement registering the change of my thought and approaches in material usage from one phase of my art-making to another. In terms of art processes, it is the play of possibilities within the change in my art-making from two- to three-dimensional form that I find to be of challenge and interest. This brings the discussion to the metaphor of the rhizomes through which Deleuze and Guattari highlight the horizontal spread of interconnected roots. Here rest my arguments of the polymer paint representing the displacement of creativity. In this sense, there is a 'serious playfulness' inherent to my artwork that deliberately, like Deleuze and Guattari, encourages an expansive insight into the impact of creativity within contemporary society.

Layering further into rhizomatic relationality, my art processes are synonymous with Benjamin's *flâneur*, randomly wandering through the arcade. Arranging and composing my artwork is akin to the passage through the arcades where a variety of visual experiences intertwine with moments of conscious and subconscious input that accumulate towards the completion of my artwork. The *Arcades Project* or *Das Passagenwerk* is a document that is formed by massive collections of fragments that include description, reflection and extracts of text from commentators, critics and historians. In my artwork, these fragments are shaped in pieces of polymer crafted individually at different periods of time.

Furthermore, I have used Robert Rauschenberg's artwork as a point to establish comparative conversation and study within my artwork. Rauschenberg's artistic production is a result of his reaction to American abstract expressionism. This ties in to the sensate and visceral visual quality of my work. It is this attribute that I conceptually associate with notions of artistic signature, upon which randomness and visual movement layers and blurs within rational and purposeful art-making. Rauschenberg's artistic creation is also known to be a critical dialogue with the flat surface that Greenberg mentioned in the essay 'Modernist painting' (1961). I find the variable arguments between Rauschenberg and Greenberg of interest and provocation within the layering of my polymer artworks. The two combined make for me a disrupted space for contemplation and further dialogue, in some ways providing a spectacle of conceptual argument that impacts upon the physical making of my work.

To provide a tangible explanation of the interconnectedness of my own and these artistic practices I encountered, I used the metaphor of a bridge to highlight value and significance. A bridge is a point of crossing from two sides where many elements for example people, objects and vehicles pass, occasionally meet and collide. A bridge is a structure that contains fluid movement that represents my artistic processes. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, it is a point of many possibilities because it is always in flux, becoming other. This becoming other is for me, an endless process of finding alternative art-making approaches. Further in complement to Deleuze and Guattari I researched Mimmo Rotella's *décollage* and used his artworks to impact and influence as another comparative means in relation to my art practice. He appropriates advertisements and movie posters from the street, shredding them into fragments and recomposing them into painting. The unique quality of his artwork is in the play of

words as pictorial elements within his composition, where becoming manifests itself through the slippage between mediums

In Chapter 2, I introduced Georges Bataille's 'formlessness' to highlight the fact that my work is process-based and not locked in terms of definition. I traced my development of artworks that are 'open ended'. My interest in the endless possibilities of visual thinking in artistic form led me to process-based art practices. For example, using Rauschenberg's *Dirt Painting (for John Cage)*, the discussion of my art-making processes is directed to play and exploration in material terms to establish interconnection to form meaning. Permanence of the artwork is not an issue in process-based art. The important part of the practice is to locate trigger points in visual terms within the exploration stage for creative intervention. It is the visual and conceptual potential in its unformed and fluid stage that make possibilities possible.

In making three-dimensional artwork for my PhD investigation, I critiqued my former practice as a painter. In Bataille's terms, this critique is in a form of action. In doing so, I adopted three-dimensional art-making to examine painting as an artistic practice from a different vantage point. This critical inquiry does not differentiate between two- and three-dimensional coda; rather it embodies painting in creative terms, extending the space in-between pigment and form to open up dialogue on interconnectedness.

Within the context of *informe*, I investigated transposition within my crossing from two- to three-dimensional art-making. This ongoing task of 'discordant creativity' remains the crucial operation of *informe*. It is here that I have observed an understanding that my practice of transposing painting into assemblage is discordant because it

embraces the painterly processes using acrylic materials while distancing from flatness to celebrate the three-dimensional art-making.

Four key aspects of *informe*, namely 'base materialism'; 'horizontality'; 'pulse' and 'entropy' are examined in relation to my artworks. In base materialism, discussion of *Attempt to Create Harmony* (Figure 20i) is premised upon the way I present the polymer material in its naturalistic or base form. In the same artwork, it appears to *horizontalise* in order to eliminate the control of 'what is to be seen' through human's 'expanded' vision.

It is doubly operational whereby seeing horizontally from a vertical position is purged while reversing the verticality in modern art, the value of what is perceived is brought low. The process 'pulse' speaks of undermining meaning and form with its focus on unstable motive and disruption as its terms of reference. My PhD artwork operates on this uneven movement in the literal sense, where the unstable movement is 'implied' within my artwork. It is registered within *Attempt to Create Harmony* (Figure 20i) as the morphing of organism from fluidity by suggesting movement of bacteria-like substances. In my visual and affective relationship with materials, where I play with form in my artwork, accident is also a vital part of my processes with 'emergence' punctuating my visual thinking to make it non-linear. I find the impact of the accidental on my creative process is always exciting, often challenging and has in many ways during the PhD investigation given rise to leads and direction for greater narrative. Play has emerged as an integral part of my creative process, alongside the accidental, where the chance of mixing and combining different painterly forms has opened up a significant understanding within my own creative sensibility, as well as how we might

encounter the historical and contemporary concepts and ideas with which my exploration has intersected. This non-linear process is argued as operation of pulse within formless/*informe*, where entropy opens itself to excesses of meaning that degenerate into oblivion. My discussion of entropy focuses on my artwork being situated to slip between objecthood and abstraction. It is the ambiguous association that generates excess of visual meaning. This draws association with Deleuze and Baroque when my painting bleeds into installation art. It is 'spilling over' or slipping into spells of deterritorialisation.

To draw together the final threads emerging from and comprising this body of writing, Chapter 4 re-establishes links with the previous writing and specifically the research discussed within the introduction. It focuses on four areas of investigation that relate to slippages and porosity, namely material; processes, visual form and multiple meanings. The natural attribute of the polymer is porous because it permits light to pass through. The porosity of the polymer paint gives life to the artworks via the use of exhibition lighting in the gallery. With reference to this porous material, my conceptual use of random thinking that is non-linear in process creates spaces for the unpredictable in my completed PhD artworks and porosity represents the in-between process and end product; a layering of concept and expressiveness; between two- and three-dimensional; different projected meanings and possibly high and low art. In doing so, I charge the physical space in-between polymer fragments to create provision for the visual meaning of my PhD artwork to be open, discursive and human.

In conclusion, my PhD practice-led research has unfolded a journey of investigation that disrupts possibilities of historical and contemporary thought through the physicality of polymer paints and the bridge motif as symbolic of human crossing.

Led by my art-making, numerous major and minor discoveries have emerged during the creative processes and also in the post-production reflection. Some of these findings have directly impacted on my PhD art production, while others have back filled as resources of knowledge gathered. Some discoveries, accidentally experienced, speak to the hidden, in and through layers of meaning making indicative of the complex entanglements that knit together in contemporary society. My PhD journey has involved a discovery that views the world by way of seeing things through layers of transparent and translucent filters with varying spatial distance in-between. While many sciences have focused much on the notion of clarity in perception, what I am proposing is an alternative artistic view that is based on blurring in the provision of aesthetic vision.

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